

CHALLENGING TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINING STRUCTURES IN A
GIRL'S HIGH SCHOOL IN LESOTHO: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE
WAYS OF DOING PASTORAL CARE

by

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Glossary of terms

Ho utloa ka litsebe le letlalo (Hearing through both ears and skin): this is a dominant Sesotho saying which asserts that a verbal reprimand has to be coupled with some spanking for a child to behave well.

Con: this is cited from Epston, D .200. It is a short form of words that begin with ‘con...’ for instance, *confess*, *confuse*, *conflict* etc

Mr. Attitude: This is the name I gave to the attitude that circulates between the learners so as to separate it from them.

Goody-goodies/little angels: These are the names given to the learners who perform better than others academically and are as a result loved more than the rest by the teachers.

Abstract

This research concerns disciplinary practices within a school system in Lesotho. The school that has been researched is a girl's high school in Maseru (the capital of Lesotho). The school belongs to the Anglican Church. I (the researcher) am a Mosotho man and an English and Religious Studies teacher in this school. For a while I have been concerned about the way punishment happens in the school, often leaving girls feeling shamed and powerless in the face of authority. I have also noticed that these disciplinary practices are losing their effectiveness, in that girls are showing resistance to the system. In other words corporal punishment, which has been the traditional form of discipline, is proving ineffective in today's world. The researcher also considers this form of discipline abusive of power. It is in the light of this that I worked within this system, both with pupils, as well as teachers, to explore alternative practices that might work with pupils, that are respectful of all parties concerned. The research is a participative action research, using collaborative narrative practices in working with both students and staff at the school.

1.3 Key words

Power relations, corporal punishment, hearing through the skin, pastoral care and practical theology, deconstruction, social construction of discipline, identity, participative practices, Discourse analysis, collaboration

Chapter 1

Challenging traditional disciplining structures in a girl's high school in Lesotho: exploring alternative ways of doing pastoral care.

1.1 Introduction

The research challenges the dominant discourses sustaining the oppressive effects of corporal punishment and the power relations and resistance within the existing disciplinary power at St. Catherine's high school in Maseru. It has used theories of social construction, deconstruction, postmodernism and narrative therapy to achieve this goal. The research is situated within the context of participatory approaches to pastoral care and practical theology.

The epistemology in this research has focused on post-structural philosophy, in which social meanings are understood as social constructs and therefore subject to being questioned and deconstructed. Wolfreys (1998:59) maintains that "...questioning allows for a reflection on the system". Therefore what Foucault (on discourse and power) and Derrida (on deconstruction) and others have suggested has influenced the manner in which the research and its analysis have been conducted. This has also influenced the manner in which my knowledge, the staffs' and the students' knowledge and power has been used in our conversations, because knowledge requires interpretation for we do not know objective reality, (White 1990:2). Bearing this in mind, this research has foregrounded a Foucauldian understanding of power as something that is held within relationship, rather than as something objective (Foucault 1980:98, Morgan 2000:18). A Foucauldian power relationship is understood as working within a discourse, or a larger belief system in society that is often hidden from the naked eye (Foucault 1980:97).

The research uses narrative therapeutic practices in the way it has constructed conversations (Freedman & Combs 1996:1; Morgan 2000:6). One of the key practices that is used is what is termed *externalizing conversations* (Freedman & Combs 1996:47; Morgan 2000:17). This is a practice in which the problems discussed are moved away from blaming a person or a system, to seeing them as an external force to be challenged. In this way the problem is often referred to in this research as having its own personality and character. This key factor in this research works to deconstruct blame, or what is referred to as *internalizing* the problem. Internalizing conversations are those that locate the problem inwardly within a person or a system forming a position of blame (Freedman & Combs 1996:48). In this way Derrida's work on deconstruction is used in the research to help with a discourse analysis of the text.

School systems in Lesotho tend to traditionally view 'learners' [students in formal schools] as objects of discipline (Quirk-Tootell 1998 in Law 1998:62). Concerning corporal punishment for example the Lesotho Government Gazette (1988:840) asserts that "corporal punishment may be administered to a pupil for misbehaviour, where the headmaster thinks that other measures would be inadequate or ineffective." This regulation is silent on the pupil's consent or voice and in what they might think about corporal punishment. It excludes the pupils from becoming a part of discipline structures.

This traditional form of power is prescribed from the top down and is proving in today's society to often be both ineffective as well as abusive. This imbalance has led to oppressive practices where students feel powerless in the face of authority and they often resist this power by resorting to negative and often destructive forms of behaviour. With this in mind, this research explores the power imbalance between the

learner and teacher in a bid to create spaces or contexts in which the learners' voices can be heard and incorporated into the behavior problem-solving processes in our school. This research therefore challenges some of the previously unquestioned assumptions concerning discipline of learners.

As a teacher seeking more effective and respectful practices in an all girls high school, this work explores the power imbalances within our school from a post-structuralist position which challenges some of the assumptions that have till now been accepted as taken-for-granted truths.

1.2 The research problem/key aims

With this background in mind, this research has asked the question: In what ways can the female students and teachers at St Catherine's school find different ways of living with ideas around punishment?

1.3 Aims of the research

The first aim of this research has been to deconstruct the power relationships held between teachers and pupils in order to build a different power relationship that is not based on blame, but rather on mutual respect.

Secondly the research has aimed at challenging corporal punishment as a way of punishing learners.

Thirdly, the research has sought to raise awareness with teachers to find other alternative ways of discipline in collaboration with students.

1.4 Background

Corporal punishment (referred to as hearing through ears and skin in this work) is a traditional form of discipline and power (Foucault 1980:96). Hearing through ears and skin is a belief among many Basotho that a child needs to be physically spanked in order to learn how to behave. The understanding behind this belief is that discipline has to be exercised verbally and physically in order to be effective. This indicates that pain is seen as essential in disciplining children. It has been a socially acceptable child rearing technique among school administrators and teachers in Lesotho.

Traditionally the Basotho people believe that discipline demands unquestioned 'obedience' to those in authority (Quirk-Tootell 1998 in Law 1998:68). Historically this may have worked effectively. Today however, this system seems somewhat archaic and ineffective. Motjoli, District Resource Teacher in Lesotho, (in Chabane 1991:23) says corporal punishment gives negative results and hinders pupils' performance. The system also renders students' discipline in schools to be generally assessed and addressed by those in power at the expense of the students (School regulations act 1988:852) section 55 number (1) and (2). From my own experience as a teacher this form of discipline rarely seems to accomplish its desired effect, that of the pupils themselves acting responsibly. In fact it seems to often have an opposite effect and students tend to resist this discipline by acting secretively, avoiding class, absconding etc. In other words the students themselves seem to have little ownership of their own behaviour.

In another way, students tell me that being denied a voice makes them feel powerless and voiceless within the school structure, (Quirk-Tootell 1998 in Law 1998:62). It is

in this sense that as a teacher I find myself ethically challenged to critically examine my own position of power or authority. My interest in this research has been to tentatively question the system together with other teachers and the girls (the learners). This extends to exploring some of the negative effects of corporal punishment on both the teachers and the students at St Catherine's high school in Maseru. The purpose of this questioning is to open space for other alternative means of disciplining.

1.4.1 My position as the researcher

I include my own lived experience as a Mosotho man into this journey. This particularly involves my memories of my schooldays. Although I am the teacher today, my experience has a history which influences this research journey, in which though not being proactive, is reflected in the deconstructive questions I ask. A part of this research has been to immerse myself in the lives of the students, seen through my own life experience. As Bird (2004:289) says: "in order to connect with the events that emotionally reverberate in children, we are required to approach the known anew". The research offers some new interpretations and sought to stop at what Bird (2004: 289) describes as 'a time in the future that is surrounded by safety'. Through challenging disciplinary practices in St. Catherine's high school, I was curious about how my past experiences around the 'stick' or punishment connected with my students' experiences to create the 'connective understanding' between us (Kotzé 2002:4).

As a researcher, I took care to move away from a position of punishment and blame, as well as refraining from giving advice to the participants, both students and teachers. I have drawn on my experience as a Mosotho child who was raised by a loving father

who strongly believed that corporal punishment would make us his children obedient, and I saw this as normal.

This ‘normality’ itself had managed to become an unquestioned identity in my own life through the moralizing powers (corporal punishment) that assumed the ‘truth’ about discipline as something that punishes unquestioningly. This moralizing power on its own is neither good nor bad, it is rather the negative effects upon people’s lives that hold the capacity to diminish their being human that I challenged. Moralizing powers are the dominant knowledges that give rise to ‘settled certainties’ (White 1995:197). These are the discourses that are generally privileged at the expense of the subjugated ones. Dominant discourses in this research are stories or practices, sometimes in the form of policies, either explicit or implicit, that confine and disadvantage children as the minority group of which my students are a part. Subjugated knowledges are some of the disqualified local informal knowledges that both the students and teachers hold, compared with the formal dominant knowledges (Foucault 1980:82). My own subjugated knowledge concerns my own experience as a Mosotho child.

My father, working within school as a formal system, also happened to be my primary teacher. We lived in a remote village in the mountains of Lesotho. In the evening he would help us with our assignments having a stick by his side, which he did not always use, but seeing ‘it’ always pulled the best out of us as well as intimidated us. This further indicates, as already stated, that dominant practices are neither good nor bad in themselves; it is rather the effects of such practices that are examined in this research.

1.4.2 The social construction of identity and masculinity within the school environment.

Males are socially constructed to be in control and ‘fix’ any problem (Watson 1998 in Law 1998:8). As a male teacher I have tended to benefit from these dominant and privileged discourses around maleness thereby being blinded from trying to understand how learners take spanking. These very discourses have limited my ability to engage with multiple understandings as a human being. It was from this position that one of my first worries was on how were the participants going keep up with the man in me who negotiates and de-centres my role of authority rather than taking the position of the knower and prescriber of knowledge in this research.

Change is usually accompanied by instability; and with my own change of position from a centered to a de-centered one, there was a possibility that the students would take advantage of me. For example during my first week as the new teacher at this school I overheard three completing learners/females talking about their so-called ‘ideal man’. All the three girls seemed to agree on the ‘tough and rough character’ of a man would be what they would look for. With the influence of peer pressure, television and the media at large, as well as culture, most students are likely to share these views. With this category in mind it created a dilemma in that I need to be respected but at the same time the greatest respect seems to be afforded to the authoritarian male figure.

This socially constructed reality around authority and masculinity was powerful and difficult for me to negotiate throughout the research. Irwin (2000 in Epston 2000:238) reflects on a teacher’s dilemma: “By adopting a more authoritarian style, I feel I’m validating this way of teaching and invalidating alternative methods. Yet, if I take a

more creative approach, I'm acting like a woman." At this point in time I felt particularly alone within the school environment in meditating over these questions, and therefore ran the risk of exclusion. I also ran the risk of holding so strongly onto an oppositional position that I was in danger of excluding the traditional practices thereby repeating the oppression of others in favour of my own exclusive 'truth'. To neutralize this dilemma, I relied on theories of social construction whereby a reality is created in relationship with other people, (Burr 1995, Freedman and Combs 1996:23). With this in mind I sought to create a context for other teachers to journey with me.

1.4.3 Challenging Corporal punishment through tracing the subjugated local knowledges

This work used deconstructive questions to expose ways in which the stick serves as a 'pain instiller' or a 'disciplinary organ' that forms a binary form of opposition in which the person in authority is always 'right' and the learner always 'wrong'. This research has challenged this binary form of knowledge and moved away from asking questions that make one person 'right' and another 'wrong' towards asking questions that focus on who benefits within this power relationship.

By asking deconstructive questions, such as 'who benefits', exposes something of the dominant discourse around punishment in which both teachers and pupils may benefit as well as suffer. This moves away from the discourse of a binary form of right or wrong. In deconstructing this practice the assumption is that both would be present, one dominantly, but the other in a subjugated form. It is these subjugated knowledges that this research has considered important in finding a way out of the binary form of disciplinary practice. These subjugated knowledges are referred to in a Derridian term of 'the other'.

This form of deconstructive questioning was used in this research as an ethical response to including both teachers and pupils in finding alternate forms of discipline, without resorting to blame and marginalizing and shaming (Wolfreys 1998:4, Law 1998:62). Working in ethically respectful ways with deconstructive question was seen as a way of challenging the dominant assumptions.

Any discourse excludes certain knowledge in order for it to hold a central position. When used in the context of school “discipline”, this is understood as control and power (Covaleskie, 1993). This therefore excludes many other practices that parents and teachers do that do not fall into this ‘dominant category’ (Law 1998:8; Foucault 1980:98; Besley 2001:76). These alternate knowledges become part of the subjugated local knowledges that fall outside of accepted language.

One of the challenges in this research has been to find ways for teachers to participate in finding alternate ways of discipline that do not fully disrupt their traditional truths. This itself has been a challenge of moving outside oppositional categories where one truth excludes another. Different meanings then emerged around punishment as a method of instilling discipline in schools.

The research was also informed by questions that draw from narrative practices where there is an awareness that dominant discourses privilege certain people’s voices over others. Morgan (2000:6) for example asks; ‘how often do we really listen to the students as the ‘experts’ of their own worlds?’ Irwin (in Epston 2000:230) says that “some teachers are easily convinced into thinking that for children to learn they should be seen and not heard”. Within this deconstructive research, dismantling of this belief led to the emergence of what Morgan (2000:52) describes as unique outcomes,

which are the subjugated knowledges held by both students and teachers. Unique outcomes are ‘times and ways in which students have resisted the influence of the problem in their lives’ (Russell & Carey 2003:74).

1.4.4 The social construction of the word ‘mistake’

The word ‘mistake’ has come up often in this research. It indicates that there has to be a ‘right’ way of doing something, throwing a person often into a binary of being right or wrong. That right way or absolute truth is determined by those in authority, which in turn is backed up by a dominant belief system or discourse (Foucault 1980:131). Teachers, in the context of this research have the power to decide what a ‘mistake’ or trespassing of the ‘right way’ is. This in turn depends on where a line is drawn. Mistake, in this context becomes a punishable offence (Lesotho Government Gazette 1988:840). This is what Foucault refers to as ‘suspicious power’ (Focault 1977:170). Teachers then tend to focus on a mistake rather than on the idea of learning, or exploring the effects of their actions upon learners. It has meant that by focusing on the word ‘mistake’ they pay less focus on alternate practices that may prove to be more reciprocally beneficial. This unbalanced relationship obliged this work to make reference to the ‘other’ which has been explored throughout the research along with ideas of power and resistance. The ‘other’ refers to that which is not focused upon a dominant discourse.

By taking the focus away from the learners as the ‘problem’, the ones who are blameworthy, for they make mistakes, together as teachers and pupils we explored alternative practices through avoiding words that blame (Freedman & Combs 1996:47, Morgan 2000:17). In this way the word ‘mistake’ becomes unstable for it becomes decentralized. For example Irwin (in Epston 2000:230) asks the pertinent

question: ‘who decides whether a comment is taken as a sense of humor or bad manners?’ From this understanding, a mistake as an identity is not self contained or fully defined in itself, and with identity placed around meanings, a mistake holds another meaning, which in this research is called in Deridian terms the ‘other’ way of understanding and responding to school discipline. This difference is what makes a new identity possible (Wolfreys 1998:7).

1.4.5 Exposing instabilities within language which are hidden behind practicing corporal punishment.

According to theories of social construction (Burr 1995:7, Freedman and Coombs 1996:29) experiences around ‘identity’ are expressed in the form of stories. Thus, stories emerge from experiences, and those experiences are told through ‘language’. McAdam and Lang (2003:49) for example, used the creative power and possibilities of language in a school and saw language ‘not only as describing but as creating and doing’. Thus, the fact that language creates our worlds means it has the power to...“lead us to feel with others in their lives” (McAdam & Lang 2003:23). In this sense the morality and intentionality in words we use influences actions we take thereby creating opportunities for it is ‘a power to create growth, flourishing, learning and love (McAdam & Lang 2003:23).

This way of understanding language as power was a step we (the participants) used within the school setting to expose the past experiences of being understood and misunderstood by each party. This was done so as to accommodate and negotiate means towards the arrival of the ‘other’ means of discipline (Wolfreys 1998:4). Positioning ourselves in language further exposed the teachers’ own suffering at the hands of corporal punishment and their own breaking of the laws enacted around it.

For instance, Lesotho school regulations (1988:853) section (55) (2) (a) maintains that corporal punishment shall be administered only by the headmaster...unless the headmaster authorizes a member of the staff to administer the punishment in his presence or in the presence of the deputy headmaster. The shortcoming of this rule is that learners do not often misbehave in the presence of one of both the headmaster and his deputy on school campus due to their demanding work. As a result, teachers do not wait for them so as to punish in their presence. Otherwise the punishment would not serve its intended purpose after such a long time. However, some learners are aware of such laws, and this has, though secretly, fueled resistance in power relations at the school.

It is in this sense that teachers have themselves acted against the set rules and continue with physical punishment, indicating yet again the instability of any given 'truth'. The unmasking of these instabilities helped us explore some of the curiosities of this research. These curiosities in turn brought about the school experiences that tend to constitute both positive and negative experiences of corporal punishment. The questions that have guided me include;

- What are some of the conditions within the school that contribute to the negative behaviour of the learners?
- What are some of the students' qualities and abilities that contribute to preferred behaviour?
- What do the students and teachers believe in, that feed into students' misbehaviour?
- What are the qualities and abilities of the teachers that might help contribute towards the desired destiny of students' behavioral changes?

1.5 Theology

Theology, in the way I engaged with it, sought to sensitively meet the particular needs of the female learners and their teachers with whom I was engaged (De Gruchy 1994:2). I therefore engaged with feminist theology. Feminist theology in this research viewed gender in terms of class difference between teachers and learners, not in gender in all its complexities such as race. Theology in this sense enhanced the mutual accountability by challenging discourses of suspicion and mistrust between learners and teachers brought about by spanking. It did this by challenging the societal structures (both at school and at home) that perpetuated the teacher-learner 'separateness' (Ackermann 1996:44). To challenge that separateness or contradictions between the participants, though I am a male, I collaborated with women (both teachers and learners) to reach a mutually agreed theological discourse. I used three areas suggested by Ackermann (1996:44) namely; drawing on participant's stories and experiences around oppression, secondly, I joined forces with the participants in our conversations to form a 'collaborative effort'. Thirdly, I drew from the philosophical insights from Foucault and Derrida's works.

The particular context was the Basotho beliefs around women and punishment. The female learners' stories of long time exclusion from disciplinary issues or powers were the primary feminist theological data. In that way the research opened space for the girls/the learners to challenge their 'disposition' (Maimela & Konig 1998:122) from inclusive theological discourses within our school. In this way the research focused on contextual theologies, particularly on the emancipation of the nameless and oppressed (Maimela & Konig 1998:131).

Theology that has historically informed the participants in this study has been fundamentalist and confessional in nature (Van Wyk 1995:9). This research has been suspicious of the effects of these mainstream western theologies that claim the knowing position (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:5).

Another theology that has influenced this research has been a participatory theology, which opened space in order to give a firmer voice to the marginalized knowledges of students and those of the teachers in disciplinary issues. In this sense theology in this research has been done by all participants. It has been a theology of growing from the grass roots up towards a self-other position (Kotzé & kotzé 2001:5). This is the theology in which students as laypersons or less knowledgeable in theology are seen as theologians in their own right (Bons Storm 1996:10). In this sense the voices of students are given chance to perform adequately without excluding the already existing disciplinary practices within our school.

The pastoral care model used in this research has focused on learner's silences and denials surrounding privilege (Bons-Storm 1996, 138). The research has employed a participatory pastoral care model that has been inclusive of all participants. This is what Bons-Storm (1996:138) refers to as a "liberal and gracious way". A participatory model challenges the oppressive descending (sovereign) power embedded in reformed approaches to pastoral care. Reformed approaches have tended to grant teachers a sense of absolute power to preach and to, fix and punish learners (whom the approach regards as 'sinners' for they trespass the school regulations) so as to sanctify them, (Louw 1998:25). The research has also challenged a confrontational approach, which has been favoured by teachers to force learners to confess the truth so as to be guided into the desired behaviour (Louw 1998:28). It is in this way that the research employed a participatory approach to pastoral care to reach a socially and

intersubjectively constructed care (Kotzé 2002:9) whereby even the learners are given a voice. The understanding being that power is never in the hands of an individual (teacher) but relational, (Kotzé 2002:9).

Therefore, the research emancipated the learner's narrated experiences and expressions of anger, frustration, and being silenced by those in power positions, thereby opening up the possibilities for the creation of communicative new persons and structures (Ackermann 1993:23) at our school.

1.6 Research methodology

This research is both qualitative, as well as action orientated. Denzin and Lincoln (1994:4) maintain that qualitative researchers 'stress the socially constructed nature of reality...the situational constraints that shape the reality...and seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning'. This research has worked with the meanings around the texts presented rather than the hard facts of a quantitative enquiry. The research is deeply participative in nature in that the research is not done 'on' the participants but 'with' them (McTaggart 1997:29, Reinharz 1992:181). As a researcher, I also took the position of participating with the students and teachers by letting go of my position as a teacher and opening my self to participant's views. By doing this I shared the risks with them and sought transformation within the disciplinary practices of the school.

The research deconstructed the oppressive discursive powers within the pre-selected texts that I selected from the research conversations. It exposed and revealed the hidden power relations behind the participant's voices. It also enabled me to arrive at and understand the languaged discursive practices of power relations within our

school. This was made possible through discursively challenging these oppressive powers through focusing on the participants' facial expressions, utterances and silences, as well as the spoken words.

This work used discourse analysis as an analytic tool on the chosen themes that were selected from the texts. McGregor (2004:3) says discourse analysis reveals how social relations, knowledge and power are constructed through both written and spoken texts in schools. He further says a text goes unchallenged if it is not critically analyzed to reveal power relations and dominance.

1.7 Data collection techniques

In negotiating dominant discourses through this interactive process, I participated on this journey in a group situation with thirty five form E (completing) students, aged between sixteen and twenty one. This wide age range is relatively common in Lesotho, where students often miss a year, or two or three of school because of conditions that are out of their control. I held two meetings with the students. Following these meetings I invited some teachers to participate with the students. The three teachers were present to listen to the students and I used what Anderson (1991:57) refers to as an outsider-witness group for the teachers. This is a group, or an audience, employed in narrative therapy to witness the conversations between myself, as the researcher and the learners. It is a technique normally employed in a therapeutic context (Morgan 2000:121), although I was using it within a research context. I deliberately created a structure for this to happen where arguing and debating were avoided. The teachers were given space to share in their views about the conversations. This research was done after school hours.

I was granted permission to carry out this research at the school, with both the teachers and the students, by the headmistress. I have written letters of consent to the student's parents informing them of the research and of the after hours conversations we had with the students. I have held three conversations with the participants and have recorded the conversations with the students by writing down the emerging points on the board and also asked one student to write down the points.

1.7.1 Data analysis

The research employed discourse analysis as a qualitative strategy to analyze the discourses sustaining the participants' stories. The understanding behind this way of analyzing data being, that every text exists within, and is created by a discourse.

To achieve the research's aims, I have selected some texts or themes from our conversations in chapter three and then analyzed them to reveal knowledge, power relations, resistance and dominance sustaining them. These themes expose discourses surrounding the experiences of the vulnerable groups I am working with. That is, the learners are being vulnerable to teacher's spanking and teachers on the other hand suffer much pain after spanking. They are also forced to perform under the objectifying 'gaze' (Foucault 1977:184) from the school management, parents and the ministry of education, thereby being forced to punish learners. Gaze means the strong and ever present observation exerted to teachers by those in power positions.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, I provided the background to this study- exploring some of the negative effects of corporal punishment as a traditional disciplinary power at St. Catherine's High school in Lesotho.

This chapter looks at some of the theories and methodologies used in this study in order to set the scene for the third chapter which explores three conversations with a class of form E students (aged between fifteen and twenty one) and some of the teachers who elected to be part of this research journey. This research falls under participative action and it will be explained in this chapter how a collaborative analysis can be achieved in a participative analysis. The research employs a form of qualitative discourse analysis (McGregor 2004:4).

The literature I use in this research is greatly influenced by the post-structuralist philosophers Foucault and Derrida. Foucault's ideas on power relations, as well as Derrida's ideas on the instability of meanings around words are central in the text. It takes up the Foucauldian critique to challenge the dominant discourses embedded in power and the way power relations help to shape and constitute personal narratives (McLeod 2000, Rose 1989 1998 in Besley 2001:73). It uses as its basis, the metaphor of pastoral care and narrative to open space for what Besley (2001:73) calls 'a power-sharing-relationship.

I have drawn on local educational literature from Lesotho. For example Chabane (1991) compiled a number of case studies from different teachers in different districts

in Lesotho. All the people he interviewed encouraged teachers to employ alternative methods to corporal punishment. For example, Miccah, Mangakane and Lehloa (in Chabane 1991, p21, 26, 27) believe that ‘noisy students’ need to be talked to and given some work to do to keep them busy rather spanking them. They also advocate giving such learners some positive reinforcements if they maintain silence or less noise. Motjoli, the district resource teacher, (in Chabane 1991:23), also encouraged one of his teachers to employ other methods of punishment so as to make learners feel free in class.

This research also cites and does some deconstructive discourse analysis on the Lesotho Government Gazette Extraordinary- School Regulations (1988:852) section 55 number (1) (b) which asserts that corporal punishment may be administered to a pupil for misbehaviour where the headmaster thinks that other measures would be inadequate or ineffective. Section 56 says schools should keep a record for each case corporal punishment is administered.

2.1.1 Language and social construction in narrative therapy

As explained in chapter one, I am working within a postmodern paradigm in which language and its meaning are understood by poststructuralist modes of thought and social construction epistemology. By postmodern I mean an age and a time in history that comes after modernism. It is an era that challenges some of the unquestioned fundamental assumptions of modernism (Freedman & Combs 1996:21, Maimela & Konig 1998:217). This does not mean that I divorce myself from modernism and its knowledge, for it plays a large part in the understanding of school life. I do however seek to challenge St. Catherine’s and my own position around the assumed truths in Sesotho language that serve as support systems for the oppressive practices around

punishment which have been upheld and supported by modernism and its beliefs. By assumed truths I mean the taken-for-granted truths that language is constructed within. Thus, I take the position of challenging the effects of these discourses on the social relations between both teachers and students. I also work at creating a conducive platform for teachers and students to participate in generating alternate life giving stories that might become incorporated into a school's disciplinary system. By life giving stories, I mean stories voiced by teachers and students.

This post-structuralist framework understands language as a discourse, which has no meaning on its own but is seen as a result of making meaning as a group or a society (Kotzé and Kotzé 1998, Gergen & Gergen 1991, Burr 1995). Kotzé and Kotzé (1997:4) see language as an access to discourse; this means that the system of language is 'always already' there, available for usage. Building on this idea within this research Burr (1995:7) says "the way people think, the very categories and concepts that provide a frame work of meaning...are produced by language that they use". Language in this sense becomes contextual and this in turn forms a part of what is described as discourse becoming 'a system unto itself' (Gergen 1991:110).

Discourse and language in this way cannot be divorced from culture and these become constitutive of our daily experiences, thus giving meaning to our existence. Discourse then is no longer retained by an individual, rather it is seen as relational. This research therefore focuses on, the social interaction in which "language is generated, sustained and abandoned" (Gergen & Gergen 1991 in Kotzé D & E Kotzé 1997:5). The research is situated within the different social relations created by language we are caught up within in our school as a community. This way of understanding language goes so far as to say that we are constituted within language as a collective group system and this becomes what Derrida and Gergen (1991:110) call a 'system unto itself'.

Linking language as a system unto itself to ‘power/knowledge’, Foucault (1980:98) points us towards the effects of knowledge on those who are excluded from its formation; in this instance the learners at St Catherine’s school. Within these power relationships that privilege certain voices over others we find ourselves within certain cultural discourses that are produced by certain set rules that are believed to be true, by those who set the rules as well as often those who receive them. Thus, an individual disappears into greater dance of dominant discourses that are assumed to be true. I therefore feel challenged to safely explore these rich culturally bound discourses on corporal punishment, together with the teachers and students, in order to find different voices that are able to articulate alternative stories around punishment. In other words the challenge is to find new ways of living with oppressive discourses without reproducing them.

2.1.2 Oppressive effects of language on both teachers and learners.

Discursive structures of language that control how we speak allow certain people the privilege of speaking and others not. This has brought much challenge into my life particularly in the light of questioning who and what actually benefits from these discourses and at whose expense. In other words as soon as a person, or group of people benefit, others become subjugated to this knowledge. I am however aware that within any dominant discourse, this privileging cannot be avoided because there is no discourse in which power is equal. Power becomes invisible, and hides within any assumed taken-for-granted beliefs of any structure (Foucault 1980:97).

2.1.3 Subjugation instigated by discourses within Sesotho language on Basotho

Discourses sustaining the learner's silence dictate our social interactions within the school environment. This means that within a power relationship students in general have been seen as objects of corporal punishment. This forms both a pastoral as well as an ethical challenge to find ways that may bring more voice to students without demolishing a schooling system that appears to have worked over many generations in the Lesotho context. This research brings back some of the fragmented parts of thinking that have been partially erased (Derrida in Wolfreys 1998:6) through what is and what is not permitted to be talked about, or act upon. Bringing back that which has been partially erased then challenges and de-centres such rules as using 'the stick' or words that 'shame'. I am positioned therefore both as a teacher and a researcher in a difficult position standing between the era of modernism and postmodernism and this tension is often difficult to sustain, both within this research frame and in my life as a teacher.

2.2 Power/knowledge

Power within a Foucauldian understanding is relational and exists among human beings and therefore cannot be found out there (Foucault 1980: 98) but is exercised through "net-like organizations". In this way power operates through the functioning of a discourse and the production of truth (Foucault 1980:93,119). Discursive practices emanate from this production and are often given an absolute truth within a structure of rules that control the language, as a discourse.

Foucault (1980) mentions two forms of power that are relevant in this research, sovereign and disciplinary power. Sovereign power is more easily measurable for it enables power to be founded in the 'physical existence of a sovereign' (Foucault 1980:104). This is a traditional form of power that has sustained different

undemocratic monarchies in the past, dating far back in history (Foucault 1980:103). Power is embedded in the hands of those in high power positions and likely to be oppressive to those at grass roots level who become the objects of this sovereign power. In this form of power I, as the teacher, would assume absolute power and therefore dispense and tell my subjects [students] what to do. There are many ways that this research challenges the effects of this form of power. Foucault exposes another form of power which he refers to as disciplinary power, or modern power. It is a form of power which is hidden out of sight and internalized within an individual person in contrast to a more upfront and from bottom down (Foucault 1980:105). Its internalization means that rather than depending on external forces to keep it in order, each person disciplines him or herself. Thus, we circulate in its webs (Foucault 1980:98) and forges us as 'docile bodies' and also conscripts us into activities that support the proliferation of ... 'unitary' knowledges and its techniques (Besley 2001:76).

Both these forms of power are present in this research and some of the detrimental effects of these forms of power are challenged. It is the oppressive effects of corporal punishment as power hidden behind the taken-for-granted or 'true discourses' in language that are exposed in this work. The power is produced and transmitted under the control of dominant discourses which both enable and constrain that which is considered to be 'true' and 'not true' (Foucault 1980:131).

Such constraints cause what Shawver (2006:9) refers to as 'hidden excitement and fascination'. The hidden excitement is the excitement or eagerness to do or explore what one is being restricted from doing by those in power positions. Some of the hidden excitements for the students may be to break rules (for instance, speaking Sesotho at school, or being late for school). The research explores how these masked

excitements might be language in a way that allows both the learners and authorities to form alternate structures that can be mutually beneficial in which both learners and teachers find ways of standing together to take responsibility for their group success. With this awareness the research therefore incorporates the teacher's and students' voices to achieve a collaborative voice.

The research works at achieving this collaborative voice, working towards a collective responsibility of a 'self other' relationship (Kotzé 2001:3), in which both students and teachers are bound together in a relationship where there is mutual benefit in standing together rather than in opposition to one another. This is also called a 'connective understanding' (Kotzé 2002:4)

This research also challenges the students' own unawareness of how they too hold onto the practices that continue to subjugate them in their resistance to authority. At the same time the research seeks to promote some of the positive aspects of resistance and empowers these 'mechanisms of power' (Foucault 1977:184) by finding language for them that seeks to not harm the teacher/student relationship. The interest in exposing some tactics of a resistance is motivated by the desire to achieve the commonly shared alternative means of discipline, the belief being that students are less inclined to resist what they have formed part of but may instead work on reinventing the future (Boscolo & Bertrando 1993:172 in McAdam & Lang 2003:49).

In order to achieve the desired collective responsibility, the research opens space for the 'emergence of genealogy' (Foucault 1980:83) by tentatively demystifying and unmasking the oppressive hidden power relations, in hearing through ears and skin. A genealogy as put by Foucault (1980:85) is an attempt to emancipate one's aspects of neglected knowledges rendering them to the realm of recognition capable of struggle

against ‘coercion of unitary formal discourses’. This means opening space for and incorporating the learner’s voices in our school set up.

The notion of resurrecting subjugated knowledges generates ‘alternative stories that incorporate vital and previously neglected aspects of lived experiences (White & Epston 1990:31 in Belsey 2001:78). Subjugated knowledges are naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy (Foucault 1980: 82). This form of marginalization may also have been experienced by the teachers when they were young and therefore through finding language it interrupts the reproduction of ‘oppressive practices’ (Foucault 1980:131) (Quirk-Tootell 1998 in Law 1998:62). For in recovering these knowledges, we challenge the effects of centralizing powers linked to the school and functioning of punishment as a dominant discourse.

2.3 Social construction

This research takes the position that the ways in which people understand the world, or means of disciplining children, are culturally and historically influenced depending on where and when in the world one lives (Burr 1995:3). Taking the assumption that the world is a social entity, it follows that it is the product of the social processes. Some of these social processes or ways of understanding the world have since acquired the stance of being taken-for-granted by members in their respective communities. Social construction therefore becomes relevant in this research for “it cautions us to be ever suspicious of our assumptions about how the world appears to be, (Burr 1995:3). Thus be suspicious of assumptions that what exists is what we perceive to exist. This serves to mean, what we as human beings understand the world to be, is likely not to be a true reflection of the real divisions.

In this view, ways of understanding are historical and cultural products and therefore ‘constructs’ (Burr 1995:6). This suggests that our knowledge of the world is not inborn or derived from nature, but is the product of our daily social interactions practiced through language. Thus, through language the shared knowledges are constructed. Therefore, language being a discourse, what people regard as ‘truth’ is not the product of objective observation of the world, but of the social processes and interactions (Burr 1995:4). Language being power, ‘sustains and excludes’ other patterns of social action through its descriptions/constructions; thus, giving ‘essences’ to certain settled meanings. Thus, a ‘stick’ as a form of punishment at St. Catherine’s is given an inside essence meaning as a ‘fixer’ or discipliner. It is in this understanding that this research challenges the effects of fixed meanings or normalizing. Thus language being a discourse, not abstract, is challenged for it makes us wonder how it has attained the status of being an absolute truth and what are its effects on people. The reason being, for social constructionism there is no “objective fact” (Burr 1995:6) for all knowledge is the construct of perceiving the world through a certain angle to serve certain, not all, interests. Thereby, excluding other interests or truths, the very ‘truths/voices’ which this research seeks to emancipate, but without excluding the already existing.

2.4 Deconstruction

2.4.1 Deconstructing discipline in schools

The participatory theological position of this work attempts to reduce the subjugation of people through being accountable to the participants and through avoiding the use of my power to ‘teach’, ‘preach’ or ‘interrogate’ the participants. Instead this ethical position allows me to enter the conversations based on shared contributions, asking

creative, curious and deconstructive questions (Wolfreys 1998:59). A conversation that gently subverts the dominant patterns of relating opens space for deconstructive changes (Winslade and Monk 1991:118 in Besley 2001:86). They suggest that deconstructive conversations unmask dominant stories that operate within the school. This enables the minority voices to be heard within the school. Unmasked dominant stories are unchallenged stories that are assumed to be true and therefore stable.

This work then becomes a response to the subjugated voices that are present within the dominant discourse, but hidden and waiting to find a voice. It is what Derrida in (Wolfreys 1998:4) calls “Some other partly undefinable identity, the other which is at work in any identity”. Thus, the ‘other’ in this work is that which is alogical to the dominant structures that sustain and nourish punishment. Lurking behind the dominant form of power and discipline in the school are alternate knowledges that are waiting to emerge. They are fragmented parts of power that have been partially erased (Wolfreys 1998:6). This exists within the power relationship and shows through where the power is least forceful or where the net is least dense. It then makes possible alternate understandings of punishment as a different and sustainable alternate discourse. Thus, it makes it possible to challenge the conditions that might be sustaining punishment. The ‘other’ is basically that which makes difference available in any identity and identity is always constructed from other places and re-created in relationships (Gergen 1991:146).

Derrida (in Wolfreys 1998:7) says that “any definition of any identity is only ever possible because of that which is not that identity, because of that which is different from it”. In this sense, some difference from corporal punishment would enable us to identify and give possible meanings and values of identity to it [corporal punishment] for that difference would mark distinctions and uniqueness of punishment as an

identity. It is difficult in this instance to define or pin down punishment without also being curious to ‘other’ concepts, principles or ideas that serve its articulation. Thus this research is deconstructing in the way it reads between the lines and looks for what is not said in saying children have to hear through both ears and skin.

In this sense, what punishment is ‘not’ gives it a certain identity and that difference needs to emerge to the realm of recognition for it leads to the alternative territories or ‘endless traces to the other’ (Wolfreys 1998:18). In this sense, punishment is redefined as no longer an essence in itself, ‘but relational’ (Gergen 1991:146). For the purposes of this work the research limits and bases its ethical stance on the power relations within discipline as a discourse in our school and mostly their social effects on both teachers and students. In this sense, deconstruction does not destroy or partition instead if fragmentations emerge from corporal punishment as a disciplinary system, it means the system was already deconstructed for its disruptive forces are already at work within any entity.

2.5 The research methodology

2.5.1 Informal pilot study

With the above concepts in mind I held a short informal conversation with some of the teachers. They came up with many alternative measures to corporal punishment, such as talking one on one with a ‘child’. Child in this sense becomes an unstable word, depending on the meaning attached to it. It could mean speaking ‘down’ to a child just as parents do; alternatively it could also have many other meanings, such as caring for, protecting or loving learners. These alternate meanings could well be present in their practices both at home as well as at school, although they may remain non-dominant

or subjugated knowledges (Foucault 1980:82). These alternatives indicate the disruption of dominant beliefs and allow for enough contradiction to begin the generation of new genealogies of knowledge from the multiple meanings held within any one word.

To pull this disruptive thread of deconstruction further, I picked on the noun ‘child’. For I felt that by privileging the noun ‘child’ ahead of ‘student’ they had now assumed the ‘motherly roles’ but not abandoning being teachers. Mothers are socially constructed to be communicative, caring, loving-nurtures who would punish their kids with affection. From that conversation I had the following questions in mind, some of which I ask in our conversations in chapter three;

- Does assuming a motherly role help one to be open to new ideas from their children?
- Would the idea of being mothers without letting go of their roles as teachers help them listen and respect their children’s/student’s points of view?
- Would the idea of being a mother help to make them aware and attentive of what’s happening in the students’ worlds, without the need for interrogation?
- Would this mother-teacher role help the teachers and students be co-operative and communicative rather than compete on the ‘right not to or to punish’?, which I believe has been thrown in the midst of teachers and students through new regulations that prohibit teachers from using corporal punishment by those in law enacting positions?

Through these deconstructive questions, in which multiple meanings were generated, alternate identities emerge. The research therefore challenged corporal punishment through the creation of alternate and multiple meanings without either party losing their positions of respect or control.

2.6 Doing Narrative therapy in a school context

Many of the theories and ideas I have worked with so far in this chapter are used in narrative therapeutic encounters with people (Freedman & Combs 1996:1). This research makes use of narrative forms of questioning that employ deconstruction, discourse and power relationships to create a self-other relationship that is respectful of both the teachers and students voices as well as my own. Narrative ways of working seek to move away from blame (Freedman & Combs 1996: 48) or as explained earlier, resisting people towards working with people to resist a problem. In this instance the problem is that traditional forms of discipline are losing their effectiveness within the school environment. Therefore, to move towards other alternative means of punishment, the research employs narrative therapy as a non blaming approach “that centers people as experts in their own lives” (Morgan 2000:6).

White (in Besley 2001:73) further describes narrative therapy as being grounded on the idea that knowledges, stories and relations people pose are shaped as people try to give meaning to their experiences and social practices or relations that give rise to such knowledges or stories. It is in that sense that the metaphor of narrative is understood in this work. Thus, narrative therapy assists people to break away from and challenge stories about themselves that they find to be ‘impoverishing’ and subjugating (Besley 2001:74). Impoverishing stories are self-blaming stories that make students feel less self-worthy. Narrative therapy challenges such impoverishing stories by employing a number of techniques to separate the problem from the person so as to reach alternate outcomes. These techniques include externalizing conversations and the outsider-witness groups.

2.6.1 Externalizing conversations

Externalizing conversations ‘are ways of speaking that separate problems from people’ (Morgan 2000:17), but this does not mean that it does not operate or impact on or pervade a person’s life (Freedman & Combs 1996:47). Thus, it separates the person’s life from the problem saturated stories so as to enable them ‘re-author’ their lives (Belsley 2001:74). ‘Re-authoring lives’ means claiming back their lives from impoverishing stories by being able to tell and live by newly emerged life-giving stories (Freedman & Combs 1996:76). The problem saturated story is the dominant problem story.

Externalizing conversations reduce the negative effects of discourses that localize the problem internally, as explained earlier. I expose these negative effects in chapter three by shifting the learner’s internalized conversations to externalized ones, by rephrasing some of their statements that seem to portray them as the problem. For instance, they said if the teacher bursts at them they feel bored and hate the teacher. I said, ‘so bursting chases love away and brings Boredom and Hatred between you and your teachers? Here I externalized or unpacked the beliefs, the practices, the feelings and attitudes so that how they have been constructed by the participants becomes apparent’ (Freedman & Combs 1996:48). By forming nouns out of the verbs ‘attitude’, ‘burst’, ‘hate’, ‘bore’, and using the definite article ‘the’ or the possessive adjective ‘my’, I give the problem an identity or the name so as to further externalize the problem from the participants, to form what Morgan (2000:19) calls personifying the problem. For instance I call the attitude Mr. Attitude.

Externalizing or reading differently the problem-saturated story from the habitual or normalizing understanding of the dominant story enables people to identify unique

outcomes (Morgan 2000:52). A unique outcome is the new emerging story that does not fit well with the dominant one. Thus, stories that emerge as a result of challenging the totalizing ways of speaking and thinking about students are unique outcomes. Such stories encourage learners to challenge the problem and not to rely on teacher's authority and expertise on disciplinary issues. Besley (2001:86) and Morgan (2000:52) call such moments 'sparkling moments'. Sparkling moments are times when the problem is less influential in one's life

2.6.2 The outsider-witness group

Following the narratively based pilot study conversation with the teachers and the participatory nature of this research; the research makes use of a teacher based outsider-witness group as a way of co-constructing new knowledges with both students and teachers. I describe here the theory and its relevance in this research and how it fits into the methodology.

This research makes use of the outsider group, as a technique used in narrative therapy, to benefit all stakeholders and ethically attempt to be both accountable and non-destructive. Narrative therapy employs the outsider-witness group members as an audience or witnesses to the conversations between the therapist and those engaged in therapy (Morgan 2000:121). In this way, an outsider-witness group is employed as a strategy to create space for students to be seen and understood by their teachers, on their own terms, whereby they actively define themselves and explain their own views in order to find a platform for the hidden knowledges. In this sense, this teacher based outsider-witness group engages teachers as "active participants" in their own history (White 1995:177). This gives them a chance to share their knowledges or views around discipline with their students.

The research prefers the term outsider-witness ahead of reflecting team in that a reflecting team is made up of professional therapists; whereas this one is made up of fellow teachers (Morgan 2000:121). The participation of teachers in this work enables them to be more conscious of themselves as they see and hear about themselves through the conversation in the second phase (Morgan 2000:122), as discussed later. They are also conscious of how they construct their preferred ways of disciplining and working with students, which White (1995:178) calls a “reflexive self-consciousness”. This in turn enables them to construct and maintain their accountable positions to the other. Here the ‘other’ refers to being curious to alternative ways of disciplining students. On the other hand, their participation as outsider-witnesses is vital to the processes of “the acknowledgement and authentication” (White 1995:178) of their student’s voices or preferred ways around discipline and to find a path to alternate discourses of power. That is, throughout the four phases of discussions discussed later, besides benefiting, the teachers also play a major role in strengthening and giving the students’ voice a firmer stance without trying to ‘teach’ or ‘problem-solve’, instead they participate as planned by me.

An outsider witness group employs four stages [parts or interviews] or narrative ways of working (Morgan 2000:122). The first is: *Initial re-authoring conversations*; here I am joined by the teachers as outsider-witnesses or audience to the conversation; Anderson (1991:57) refers to this as a “listening or reflecting position”. Thus, they listen as I interview students in a re-authoring conversation. A re-authoring conversation is the one that allows a person to claim back his/her life from impoverishing stories about own life. The second stage being: *A re-telling from the outsider –witness group* (Morgan 2000:122); here I, as the interviewer, and the students become the audience while the teachers discuss and focus on the possibilities

of alternate life-giving meanings around discipline (unique outcomes) they identified in the first interview. The conversation is between the teachers and not directed to the students. They avoid advising or telling the students what to do. This is done through speculating; thus they may situate the conversation in their own personal experiences and wonder how that would resonate with what the students said. That is, speaking in ways that recognize students as experts of their own lives (Morgan 2000:2). While the third is: *the response from those engaged in therapy/ the students*; the focus is on students' experience of the teachers' conversation. They comment on what they found interesting and what they found not interesting from their teachers. The fourth being (Morgan 2000:125): *discussion of the entire therapeutic process*. Here the focus is on the reflection on the entire interview with the aim of giving everyone the chance to reflect on the discussion. They might ask me anything about my contribution to the discussion; such as why I asked certain questions.

In the progress of these interviews I write and ask one learner to write the emerging themes or alternative means of disciplining. These themes are analyzed together with the participants, making this a participative discourse analysis methodology. After the discussion each group is written a letter as another means of trying to open space for other alternative untold stories around disciplining in our school. Epston 1994 in (White 2003) by Fox (2003: 26) says the words in a letter 'do not disappear' the way a conversation does; they endure through space and time. This is because they are here to stay, as long as they are filed properly. It is from this understanding that the research uses the therapeutic letters as a way of putting the shared themes into a 'permanent form' (Fox in White 2003:27). Permanent form means a letter becomes some form of reference to its recipient, because when ever read, the ideas discussed in the conversation become revived. The letters are also intended to appeal to different

groups of people who may read them, this include students and teachers from other schools, other stake holders.

2.7 Theology in context

Theology, in this work, is not based on the church discourse but rather on student's suffering and 'powerlessness' (Maimela & Konig 1998:131). It is therefore understood as a cultural discourse within our Sesotho culture for it is a social construct. In this way, theology is deeply embedded within the cultural norms of the school as a taken for granted knowledge. That is, theology as a social construct becomes contextual, hence creating a context for both teachers and learners to understand God within a school environment. The research understands theology 'as how people relate their faith in God due to the meanings they make of their historical and cultural contexts (Cox 1984:176 in Rossouw 1993:894). It is in this sense that theology in this work does not answer for, or speak on behalf of the students; instead opens space for their silenced voices and helps bring about an accountable position of both the students and teachers towards the emergence of the 'other' forms of punishment at our school.

Most schools in Lesotho, as in most colonized countries, were founded by male missionaries, who paid great attention to church doctrines and the training of the clergy to equip them with enough resources to control, and rule over their congregations (Bons Storm 1998:8). That training or approach has formed both sovereign as well as disciplinary powers (Foucault 1980:97) that have made the learners the moral subjects to teacher's power. That is, learner's inputs and views in educational and disciplinary issues are hardly taken into consideration. Unfortunately, that 'clerical paradigm' sustained by sovereign powers, or the discipline concerned

with the ways the clergy/minister has to act (Bons Storm 1998:9) was embedded within the already existing patriarchal system that marginalized women and those at grass roots level in different spheres of life among many basotho. It is the same clerical paradigm that sustained the fundamentalist or confessional theological approaches, practiced by teachers on learners in schools (Van Wyk 1995:88) for its important task was the training of the clergy to rule, control and minister and not to be ministered.

This research therefore focuses theologically on the oppressive effects and power relations at our school sustained by sovereign or clergy focused power relations within the confessional theologies. It thus challenges power relations whereby the teachers and those in authority have been constructed as the knowledgeable shepherds/leaders, with absolute power to lead the flock/students to the greener pastures and direct them to the stable or acceptable behaviour. While on the other hand; the students are seen as the sheep, lacking knowledge that leads to the stable (Bons Storm 1998:9). This is proved by the fact that most teachers at my school tend to focus on the biblical citations that propagate the punishing of students, such as proverbs 23, 14-15 (Zinkuratre & Colacrai 1999:1038).

Therefore, to accord the students the space to tell their own preferred ways of being punished, or disciplined, the research challenges these clerical discourses with the participatory theology (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:5) through incorporating the voices of all stakeholders. This participatory approach enables both the teachers and students to join forces to demystify the hidden oppressive discourses behind corporal punishment and the oppressive God cited in proverbs.

This position of not trying to do away with the existing dominant discourses runs away from being in banal, or to assume the disappearance of the already existing dominant discourse. Binary is a system of power that makes things to be only thought as one way or another (Foucault 1979:83). It is therefore not the focus of the research to do away with the dominant discourses. Instead this theological position is taken so as to create the platform that enables all stake holders to ‘come and build together’ as Nehemiah chapter 2:17 says in Zinkuratre and Colacrai (1999:662). Thus the participatory theology in this work enables the research to see the students not as unknowledgeable sheep, but rather as the ‘other’ body parts of Christ, whose voices though not equal to those of teachers, are significant as well, as in Ephesians 2:16 in Zinkuratre and Colacrai (1999:1970).

2.7.1 Narrative Feminist theology

‘We are bound in relationships that claim responses’ (Ackermann 1996:45) and such responses make us accountable to strengthen and expand our relationships. Relationships in this work are power centered and enhanced through the self-other narratives of both teachers and students employed in outsider-witness group. To enhance that self-other or connective understanding (Kotzé & Kotzé 2002:4) between the participants and to reach the aims of this work, the research opens space for the relational feminist theological powers where power circulates between the clergy and the nameless/female students. These disciplinary forms of theological powers are intended to allow students voice the other feminist theological means of discipline besides hearing through ears and skin.

The research uses the Feminist theological insights around ‘self-reflexivity’ (Ackermann 1996:40) to reflect on my own position in this work so as to enhance a

deeper understanding of the participant's concerns around discipline. It also uses a critical theory to challenge some of the participant's (Basotho) histories and traditions and their contributions that have shaped the oppressive theologies in our school. This is done with the aim of reaching the self-other practices. Again as a collaborative discipline it provides an accountable reflection on the participant's theories and practices of 'struggle and hope' based on their stories and experiences of oppression. The struggle in this sense means the ascending powers towards the teachers. The struggle theories and practices include learner's feeling bored in the teacher's presence and shaming their teachers. In this way, feminist theology sees 'things from the outer circles' (Ackermann 1996:42) to challenge the 'from above' oppressive powers. That is, it challenges the habitual ways of punishing learners that have assumed the most appropriate ways of punishing learners.

The student's stories of exclusion and long term silence in their school life become the primary feminist theological data in this work. The 'seldom heard' (Graham 1999:195) or hidden dimensions of their stories for negotiating their preferred ways around the existing theological tradition sustaining corporal punishment are vital to this work.

It follows then that feminist theology as a practical theology, occupies the space "where human suffering evokes a religious response" (Graham 1999:187). Thus it draws its responsive praxis from physical suffering [hearing through the skin] of these female students and the emotional suffering of being denied a voice; hence offering a transformative challenge to the existing oppressive system of power at our school. In this sense, it questions the norms of authentic theological discourses that have always assumed absolute truth. This way of doing theology stems from 'a passion for change' (Ackermann 1996:45) by all. It is in this passionate sense when the oppressed

initiate the process of liberation that God liberates; for he liberates “by human action from below” (Pattison 1994:66). Thus, God does not work by transcendent liberation from above, instead reveals himself in the liberation action. That liberation action is achieved in our conversations in chapter three as the learners are given a voice.

2.7.2 Pastoral care

The contextual pastoral care comes as a response in this work to challenge the clerical or western approaches to pastoral care that have always given the teachers absolute power or ‘a privileged position of the knower’ (Bosch 1991:439 in Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:5) at the expense of the laity/students. In our school, hearing through ears and skin, as a dominant Basotho traditional way of disciplining students, has always been sustained by oppressive powers hiding behind some of the pastoral care approaches such as reformed and confrontational approaches by their use of descending forms of power, thus sovereign powers.

A ‘reformed approach’ to pastoral care has, perhaps inadvertently afforded teachers the power to proclaim the word of God in order to redeem the learners from the ‘sin’ of trespassing the school regulations. This proclamation has been in the form of shouting at and spanking learners. Thus, teachers have focused on administering sanctification to learners, and not on understanding why learners sometimes behave as they do. Thus, learners have been forced to ‘convey forgiveness’ and not to challenge some regulations or administration issues that might be oppressive to them (Louw 1998:25). By challenging the fundamentalist/confrontational and confessional approach that teachers have employed to guide the students through confrontation, admonition and scriptural advice (Louw 1998:28) the research has favoured both the

learners and teachers alternative ways of understanding discipline through shared responsibility.

The participatory approach to pastoral care used in this research challenges this resistance by allotting a voice to both students and teachers so as to reach a socially and inter-subjectively constructed care (Kotze & Kotzé 2001:7). In this process I collaborate with the teachers and students to challenge corporal punishment as an ‘oppressive discourse and negotiate ways of living in an ethical and ecological accountable way’ (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:8). This accountable way, inter-subjective, inter-relatedness and co-construction of care enhances ‘a non-patronizing’ participation (Bons-Storm 2001 in Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:8). It is the same inter-relatedness that abolishes ‘hermeneutical bipolarity’ which sees power as ‘bio-power’ or correlational (Louw 1998:31). Thus, as in the hands of God or those in authority therefore descending and also in the hands of laity whereby it ascends and hid the roof- thus top-down form of power; Whereas in participatory approach power is never in the hands of an individual but circulates among them (Kotzé 2002:9).

2.8 Discourse analysis as an appropriate methodology for analysis

I have selected discourse analysis as my main analytical tool within qualitative research. Discourse analysis sees every text as conditioned and ‘inscribing itself within a given discourse’ (Fulcher 2005:3). This means that discourse analysis interprets and analyses dominant discourses by ‘studying and analyzing’ them within the selected texts to reveal and expose the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias and how these sources are initiated, maintained, reproduced, and transformed within specific social, economic, political and historical contexts (Van

Dijk 1988 in McGregor 2004:8). In this research, a text refers to the written voices or themes of the participants.

Discourse analysis further reveals hidden motivations and ideological assumptions in participants' words. It exposes power imbalances and social injustices within the texts. The analysis challenges some of the taken-for-granted assumptions that sustain corporal punishment. It also shows how these discourses continue to work at all levels of the relationships (Foucault 1980:97). Van Dijk (in McGregor 2004:4) says discourse analysis does not have a unitary theoretical framework or methodology because it encompasses a range of approaches instead of one school. It therefore fits well with Derrida's theories on deconstruction and Foucault's views on power/knowledge, as suggested in chapter one, to help me expose how power relationships between those given the right to punish and the punished/students are created in our school and to analyze the theological effects of discourses sustaining corporal punishment as power.

The analytic challenging of these power relations also focuses on (the written) participants' facial expressions, utterances and silences as these are also a part of the way we language meaning. For example, there are places where teachers keep tapping their chests to show their affection towards the learners. I explore some of these texts with a 'critical eye' (McGregor 2003:5), in order to be curious about that which is both said and not said within discourse. In addition to this, I sometimes deconstruct a single word or a group of words that I feel give clues to alternate meanings of the word. The analysis focuses on the production of knowledge, not on word order or sentence structures.

Chapter 3: Hearing participant's voices.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the three conversations I held with the form E students and the three teachers who agreed to participate in this work. The first conversation involved thirty five students, while the second involved twenty eight students and three teachers. I had hoped that the students would be consistent in all three conversations but due to writing final examinations the third conversation involved eighteen students whom I met separately from the group of fifteen teachers, though most of them were not part of second conversation. I also include two therapeutic letters, one that I wrote to the students and the other to the teachers. The therapeutic letters were written to continue the participative research conversation by further deconstructing my power as researcher over the students and teachers.

3.1.1 The nature of the questions I asked the participants and the reflection done on participant's voices.

In this chapter I ask questions that 'co- author' experience (Anderson & Goolishian 1990b; Penn 1982; Tomm 1988 in Freedman & Combs 1996:117). By saying, they co-author I mean that they set the new dimension in our conversations by suggesting beginnings and endings of experiences at the same time including and excluding some experiences.

The deconstructive questions I use in this research, as suggested by Freedman & Combs (1996:121), reveal the history of the students' relationship with resistance. For instance, I often ask the question 'how were you recruited into this way of thinking?' I

also challenge the contextual influences of resistance as an attitude. For instance, I ask questions about the places, environment and people who support their ways of behaving. I mostly focus, however, on the effects of hearing through skin in the student's lives. This is designed to explore the effects in the relationship between teachers and students and school work in general. The questions I ask expose the interrelationship with other beliefs or 'friends' as I call them in this work. For instance, I externalize the ideas, habits and feelings that nurture or keep telling students to do the same mistakes. I also externalize the tactics or strategies resistance employs to worm its way between the teachers and students. Thus, I unpack the beliefs, practices, feelings and attitudes of the participants that might have, for many years, forced them to unaware act as docile bodies in their own oppression.

The reflection done on the participant's voices in this chapter is participative (McTaggart 1997:29) in nature, for it is in line with the narrative ways of working that centre around people's knowledge. It reflects on how I worked 'with' and not 'on' the participants and how the socially constructed themes were reached (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:4). It gives larger details on how the participant's experiences were created and given meaning, though this is fully discursively analyzed in the following chapter. Thus, it unpacks how their long time knowledges were voiced and how we gave them a firmer stance. The reflection is not really the analysis but unveils the participant's gestures and reflects on the effects as seen and experienced by participants and how I helped them to step out of the blaming discourses.

3.2. Hearing the voices: the first conversation

The first conversation included the thirty five Form E students in a classroom after school (at 3.20 pm) and lasted for an hour. The teachers were not invited to this

meeting. The plan in this first meeting was designed as a form of listening to the students, who were seen as most affected by the discourse of corporal punishment. At the end of the conversation I asked them what they would like us to talk about in the following conversation concerning physical punishment; a meeting in which the teachers would be present. This question was designed to empower the students and assist them in finding language for their concern. It is both deconstructive in nature and begins its own process of re-constructing new ways of knowing that lie hidden within the assumed truths. This was done with the aim of helping the students voice their concerns and to empower them to speak up respectfully but authentically in the presence of the teachers. I was at a particular advantage with these students in that I had spent some years building trust through many therapeutic conversations (counseling sessions). Throughout the conversation I took notes and at the same time had asked one of my students to also jot down the points, thus avoiding a unitary form of my own power and blindness. I have selected certain texts from our conversation, and this was done with the discourse in mind. The following points were recorded:

Students: *'We hate pain, as much as we may be doing mistakes; therefore please the teachers should not associate us with pain. Instead they must sit down with us and 'bua hantle'- (talk nicely with us) and show us our mistakes so as to detach a person from their mistakes'.*

Discourses embedded within this theme contradict the teacher's settled assumption that learner's mistakes call for spanking. This therefore generated a great deal of talk with the students re-iterating the importance of being talked to as people with politeness rather than as detached objects. To understand this use of words that privileged the 'person' ahead of a student and 'detached' I asked them;

Mokhele: *'So are you saying the teachers are detaching a student and not a person from her mistakes?'*

One of them stood up and said:

A student: *'According to how we are treated at home and here at school a child and a student are not treated like a person because just like animals we are hardly consulted and every thing is done onto us. But a person, for instance our married brothers are consulted and never physically beaten. And by the way we are not small children but high school students'.*

It was as if the group echoed this by shouting;

The students: *'We are no longer small kids, we need to be consulted'.*

And all this should be done without 'bursting' at us, because we will do the same mistakes just to annoy you, we feel bored, we will hate you, for we get ashamed when burst at. Therefore we need to be respected so that we will do the same; but if not insult us and we will do the same.

It appeared that this discourse of being spoken 'down' to was not just confined to school, but happened in their homes as well. It seemed that the girls were showing their resistance by speaking as 'one' group rather than as individuals. I was curious to the usage of the first person plural pronoun 'we' instead of I because they were not talking at the same time, but each time one of them spoke she used the personal pronoun 'we'. My curiosity was due to the awareness that this plural and inclusive voice marked the inclusive nature of the endless traces to the other within any discourse (Wolfreys 1998:4). I therefore just said so 'we'. They laughed but one of

them told me that they were together as one. Asking them on how this unity came about and what it meant to them; they said as soon as they get in the second year (form B) they get to be friends and love each other so much that it gets hard for one to give out the name of a friend/fellow student to the teacher if asked who made the noise or misbehaved. Thus, they said:

Students: it's better to be mistreated by a teacher rather than other students because we spend much of our time together. This is because any one who gives out a name to the teacher is labeled or given a name of 'goody-goody' for she kisses up the teachers so as to be loved more than other students.

This exposes the idea that spanking the students is achieving the opposite effect that it is designed to; it promotes ganging up against the disciplinary system. It also encourages secretiveness among students. Students are forced to either side with teachers, or stick together. By doing this, they become stronger as a group but it also invites division among themselves when one girl betrays the group. Thus, a student who gives out a name is then excluded from group discussions and given many other sanctions such as keeping her out of 'mgozy' (they said 'mgozy' is a secretive romantic girl talk). They strongly told me that this exclusion is the most painful thing at school one can experience and that one cannot pass well under such a treatment.

I felt somewhat trapped here in my identity between a teacher and 'one of them'. I did not comment on this but wondered about the discursive ways of thinking and behaving and the actions that supported these ways of behaving and how and when were they recruited into these ways of thinking or reacting towards other students and the elders. This separation was revealed after I had asked several questions. The head girl stood up and said:

The head girl: *It's the 'attitude' sir! 'These guys have that bad attitude that circulates amongst them, they sometimes even shout at me whenever I tell them what the school administration or one of the teachers said'.*

This served as an example of this divide between the 'us' and the 'them' (students and those seen to be in authority; in this instance the teachers and the head girl). The deputy head girl and few others applauded hands and said

'Yes, there is that bad attitude among us' thus aligning themselves with the head girl and the teachers.

In order to avoid this polarity and blame, I explored alternate identities in which people were not blamed. The problem shifted to among the students, leaving the head and deputy head girl out. I sought to clarify this 'attitude' through externalizing it from learners, thus shifting the blame away from people towards a problem that they could all identify with. This attitude and practice seemed to disable and impoverish them as a group (Besley 2001:24). I dismantled it by using the possessive pronoun 'him' for this attitude so as to help the learners see that they are not the attitude but people that are influenced by this attitude. This in turn helped them to see and describe instances in which the attitude as 'the problem' did not have a hold in their lives. This acknowledgement would in turn help them understand the influence of the problem in their school live which often subjected them to spanking/pain.

Mokhele: *'but I have never seen him'*,

Students: *'who'?*

Mokhele: *'Mr. Attitude'*.

Students: *you wouldn't see 'it' because it's among us.*

Mokhele: *'do you mean I can only see his effects, and not himself because he circulates amongst you?*

Students: *(strongly) yah!*

Mokhele: *and to me, judging by your facial expressions, he looks strong, isn't he?*

Students: *'yah he is'.*

This was the first time they used the pronoun 'he' to refer to the attitude prompted by my own narrative questions that began to separate the problem from either them or the teachers. Both the pronouns 'it' and 'he' externalized the problem (which is attitude) from them. This helped to expose the influence of the 'attitude' as one of the 'support systems' for pain inflicted by corporal punishment as the problem in learner's lives (Freedman & Combs 1996:126). We had agreed to stop our conversations at four o'clock, so we had to stop here because it was four.

Following this conversation I reflected on the discursive powers behind the head girl's commanding voice, that just like teachers, allowed her to be confrontational thereby possibly forcing other learners to confess that it was true they were journeying with the attitude, by saying 'yes'. I was happy to see that through challenging her blaming voice, we had exposed the influence of the attitude in learners' lives and relationships with their teachers, hopefully shifting the power relationship between the head girl and the other learners to becoming more collaborative. They would hopefully in turn change their relationships with it and those between themselves and both their prefects and teachers. Understanding and 'seeing' it from a different angle puts it in 'a different light' (Freedman & Combs 1996:123)

3.3 The second conversation

In the second conversation we were joined by three female teachers and twenty eight students. I had already made them aware that they were not going to teach but would listen to their students' views and participate in the allotted time. We began the conversation with myself as researcher picking up on the last conversation. I asked about 'Mr. Attitude' and his oppressive effects on both the teachers and the students. By asking this question I began to deconstruct the oppositional split between teachers and students. As we did this, many new alternative themes to corporal punishment emerged. However, I was also aware that fewer students participated in this conversation compared to the previous one. This could have been for many reasons; for example the power relationship in the room was radically changed with the presence of the teachers. It could also have been the effect of the power of the head girl voicing her beliefs about 'attitude' in the last session. Because not many of the students raised up their hands I sought out bodily communication aware that they communicated through nodding their heads and saying 'yes' to some of the issues that were raised. I noted such times when they made a roar 'yes' as acts of deconstruction, or where it was perhaps hurting most through both the roar and the silence. To further accommodate them, I invited those who supported a certain point to raise up their hands. For instance on asking whether it was important for the teachers to communicate respectfully with them; they all raised up their hands.

In this conversation I relied upon my own notes rather than the literal voices of the learners to describe the conversation, though I sometimes highlight their literal voices. In retrospect it might have been helpful to use a voice recorder with batteries as there was an electric power cut a few minutes after we began the session with the tape recorder, which meant that I had to rely on my notes and memory. The following

description is therefore my own reflection of what I heard, which is clarified and checked through the letters I wrote. Here I tabulate the central themes of their concerns which I deconstruct in the following chapter. I use the students 'African English' in these excerpts which is not grammatically accurate.

-They said that they would not mind being punished for failure to achieve some of the things they had agreed upon with their teachers.

-Some of them said that they reduce the effects of the intended pain of physical punishment by laughing at each other; thus while being punished, one of them who fears pain most and sometimes cries even before being punished, makes them laugh and that laughter eases the pain.

-They, however, said that the gentle, firm and strong words from a teacher are hardly forgotten and make it hard for them to repeat the discussed unwanted behavior at our school.

-They also said that the most effective and hurting punishments are; being sent home and suspended for a couple of days, being subjected to tiring work in the hot sun or rain and being denied the things they like most such as buying food at break time.

-But still they maintained that teachers should never let go their firm and strong personalities for the attitude amongst students may over power them. -They further said that the attitude makes them fail the examinations and then lie to the parents about the teachers so as to please and avoid being beaten by the parents.

There is a general assumption, both at the church school, and more generally in society in Lesotho that God is a part of conversation and a real part of the social construction of discipline. I therefore asked them about God and punishment. The students said that God definitely loves the disciplined students; and would support their being punished provided they intentionally failed to do what was 'agreed upon' between them and the parents or teachers. They quoted the bible in order to support this idea. This upholds the idea that God communicates with his children through the bible and lays down fair and clear rules. He does not punish in an arbitrary way. The pupils argued that the teachers should do the same. They followed this argument further by saying that the teachers' failure in being fair and consistent means that *'it makes us students to commit sins by allowing Mr. Attitude to convince us to disobey school regulations'*. I understood this to mean that just as God's commands or the word of God is read to them daily at the assembly every morning; the school regulations should also be repeatedly, even if it's not every day, told to them.

They mentioned that the school regulations were once given to their parents five years back in the school's prospectus when they first arrived at the school. Some of them, due to different factors, had never even seen them because their parents never gave them, while some said that the parents are illiterate and have never paid much attention to them because they were only happy that their children were admitted at this school. However, the school takes it for granted that they know them. They further suggested that they should be given copies of school regulations so that they may also read on their own. Within the same discourse, the deputy head girl strongly suggested that:

The deputy head girl: *'The word of God should be coupled with some motivational speakers at the assembly to cheer us up every morning so that we would think about*

and meditate on positive things all day. And that would make us enjoy attending the assembly for some of us are always whipped for arriving late and playing during the prayer’.

The above statement exposes that the morning prayer conducted by their teachers, as part of communication between them and God, is not enjoyable to learners for it lacks motivation. The above statement further exposes the shortcomings of the discourses sustaining the confessional and confrontational approaches of telling the word of God to learners. These approaches seem to have often closed doors for teachers to find or think of other alternative means of conducting the morning assembly and said prayers. Thus, teachers have often remained stuck with the approaches they found appropriate and never thought of how learners got on with the approaches. Hence why the teachers have only been convinced that learner’s unacceptable behaviour during prayer and late arrival called for spanking and not other alternatives. This has therefore failed to keep learners meditating on positive things about the word of God and moral issues.

From this discursive power position it seems that the powers and knowledge sustaining the word of God have always been assumed to be in the hands of those having a voice or power to dictate how students should sing hymns and pray, thereby sweeping aside the learner’s preferred ways of praying or being told the word of God. This is evident in the head girl’s comment as she added more on what her deputy had said;

The head girl: *‘We should not always be told what not to do, or what the bible tells us not to do. Instead be motivated about what to do and what the bible tells us to do. And what we do needs to be appreciated by the school.’*

The disruptive acts of deconstruction expose that teachers have often focused on what learners should not do. The head girl appears to be in a difficult position in her efforts to be seen supporting both the teachers and the students. To explore this further, I then opened the floor for the teachers while the students kept quiet. The conversation moved from the word of God to a more general one. It appeared that at this point the teachers became defensive of their position and they were joined curiously by the head-girl who kept saying

The head girl: *'Yes guys! That is what you do. I have seen that you hate directives' and you should remember that while you are still alive you will always be under certain rules for there are regulations everywhere, at home, at school, along the roads and hospitals, and if we don't obey them its hard time for us'.*

The polarization continued and it was difficult to maintain a reflective position. Students and teachers alike brought evidence of unjust accusations and punishments with dates and times included. In order to reduce the tension I re-introduced the idea of 'Mr. Attitude' as a way to move away from a blaming position, which would not have achieved my research objective. The conversation then moved towards the way Mr. Attitude blinded them from seeing the times when the teachers forgave or acted in their favor. This opened spaces for moments of mutual care and respect and one teacher told them how much she loved them. One of the shy girls just burst;

The student: *Wow! We were never aware that we were loved by the teachers.*

Some remained silent but with smiling faces and I took the silence and the smiling faces to be the acts of deconstruction, by this I mean that the wall between them and the teachers was steadily being subverted and new truths emerging.

However, this time around the head girl decided not to talk, but commented later in a written form. I took this as the results of the disciplinary power (the internalized shame) that maybe for the fact that she was on the side of the teachers she did not want to let them down in the presence of other students. In her letter she says the knowledge that teachers love them won't change things over night therefore it has to be proven to students. She had written in English and here I write her exact words;

'It has to be proven to us that teachers love us, for actions speak louder than words'. And, if proven, then Mr. Attitude would be given the first name 'Positive'. 'Positive Attitude' to everything at school, 'well that does not mean that all of us will be little angels; there will be no fun in that, right? Yes definitely' 'we know that in the world there is bad and evil, but in this case the good will over do the bad and neutralize it hence having "not so good students", not "bad" students'.

The head girl in some ways was contradicting her previous statements opening the way for further deconstruction of the dominant text. The deconstructive analysis of this letter and contradicting powers sustaining it is done in the following chapter. I wondered whether by saying 'positive attitude to everything at school' was the way she defined Mr. Attitude as the 'negative attitude to everything at school due to being physically beaten. In this sense I remained curious to teachers' ways of loving learners that would see the emergence of Mr. Positive Attitude. I therefore asked her about the relations between 'the goody goodies' mentioned earlier by other students and 'little angels' she talks about. She said they were synonymous because just like little angels,

students who are labeled as goody goodies, are those that please the teachers to avoid being physically punished.

NB. She brought this letter ten days after our (second) conversation, she wrote it as a response to my letter to them and also as a platform to say out what she had not said in our previous conversation. I, however, decided to interweave it here so as to keep the theme of ‘teachers’ love’ towards learners as was said by one of the teachers. And in the following paragraph I continue with the conversation I held with the teachers and learners in our second conversation.

It was at this point that I gave the students the floor to reflect and comment upon what the teachers said. The pupils returned to one of their original themes; that of being more included in decisions of discipline, re-iterating that the teachers should sit down with them and not always shout instructions at them. Thus, they must have time to listen to what they have to say, and both parents and teachers have got to hear why they behave in certain ways and they must not assume to know everything about the students’ ways of behaving.

One girl, who appeared extremely emotional, raised her hand for three times and in all these times, she complained that teachers, just like her mother who keeps telling her that she will get pregnant, never take time to discuss emerging issues with them. And failing to do so the television and media at large will tell them and they will listen because they actually hit the nail on the head. It was as if she connected something of the larger discourses of power that operate in society colluding with dominant power structures.

I reflected this and said,

Mokhele: *'so the forms of media hit the nail on the head?*

The student: *'yes they do, but often the teachers and the parents do not', for instance my mother would only tell me to stop playing with the boys',*

Another student seemed to echo this sentiment by saying *'my mother always says, 'stop running around with the boys because they are silly'.*

In response there was the uproar of *'yes'*. Then I asked those whose mothers had actually mentioned the name *'sex'* to raise up their hands and there were only two, while the rest said the parents beat about the bush. They went on to say that it is a different case with their brothers, for the fathers keep encouraging them to propose love to girls. Although this is beyond the scope of this research, sexual behavior appears to be controlled by hidden powers of assumed meanings around words such as *'play with the boys'* which hide that which needs to be discussed between parents and children. These are the very unsaid discourses that feed the large discourse of hearing through the skin. To expose such discourses one of the learners said her father loves to say about her younger brother as he sees him talking to girls;

The father: *'You see he is a man'.*

I sensed how these patriarchal discourses hit hard on Basotho females and also how there appears to be a cultural void in crossing the gap in today's urban society between parents and children. In some ways Mr. Attitude appears to sustain such discourses in what Foucault would call resistance and the hidden excitement. In challenging media as the educator and the hidden excitement, one teacher said;

The teacher: *yes, as much as we may not hit the nail on the head, we are*

your parents and you have to listen to us'

The student: *'and so is the media, we are its children'*

Teacher: *'what do you mean?'*

Student: *'we are born, and live in this era and it is not the same with yours, and you have to understand how the world around us dictates us to live whether beaten or not'.*

The other students applauded. We, the teachers, just laughed and gave no comment, indicating perhaps that we understood what she said.

In a somewhat unplanned way and sensing that the conversation had hopefully moved beyond 'blame' I opened the floor for the direct conversation between the teachers and the students. The students told the teachers that teachers, including those at primary schools, should revise their approaches towards students and this has to be internalized and become part of the teacher's daily behavior. For instance they must not shame them in the presence of other students, instead must talk one on one for that instills a sense of responsibility in them. The students went on to say that when 'shamed', they retaliate or remove the shame by directing the blame back to the teacher. They do this through making other students laugh or look down upon the teacher. Alternatively the students talk about the teachers' short comings. They further said that the teachers should work on their tempers, thus cooling down before punishing students.

The teachers, who were repeatedly tapping or touching their chests, seemed to agree on many points, such as seeing the importance of communication, and the school giving students different forms of entertainment to *'direct their powers to because they are energetic'*. But they asked the students to revise their relations with Mr.

Attitude for he seemed to be bringing some bad friends in our student's lives. They said he seemed to convince the students to behave like the western kids. They told the girls that as teachers they derive no joy in punishing them but are forced to do it because of the ignorance and the childish characters the students are journeying with. The teachers further said that they hated punishing students because they are at the same time punishing themselves by beating people who do not listen.

The teachers also said punishing students is a punishment to them. They described situations in which following a beating of a student they find it difficult to sleep at night. They suffered with aching arms, sharp pains beneath their breasts and headaches or high blood pressure. They said this was a direct result of the anger they felt while beating a student. They went so far as to say at times they had to consult a doctor, thus wasting their money. In as much as the teachers described negative effects on their lives from this form of punishment, their position remained dominantly one of blame. I also sensed that these painful stories about the effects of corporal punishment on teachers are hardly, if at all, told. This means that teachers also become docile bodies to disciplinary power in their own subjugation (Foucault 1980).

This reminds me of the parent who recently came to our school and asked us [the teachers] to whip his daughter because he can no longer beat her due to doctor's advice for he now has high blood pressure. He told us that he is a strong disciplinarian who believes in beating his child till she gets tired. But he never asked himself whether the beating was effective or not because the child kept on doing the same mistakes. Again many parents blame the teachers for their children's failure in examinations and believe it is because 'today's teachers' no longer whip students. They tell us of how their teachers brought the best out of them by beating them. The

question remains, is corporal punishment today still effective as it was then? Are ‘we’ as teachers labeled fairly as ‘today’s teachers’ who do not beat? And who benefits from corporal punishment, because it seems to hit hard on both the teachers and the students.

These oppressive effects of power led me to ask learners how they felt about being physically beaten during the lessons. Quite a few students said they didn’t really mind it provided it was coupled with discussion, not done often, or by an angry teacher. However, the majority said they hated ‘pain’ and ‘the person’ who instills it in them. Motjoli (in Chabane 1991:23) adds to this by saying that learners ‘hate’ and feel frightened by corporal punishment. Thus while being beaten they hate the person who beats, not the problem that brought them into trouble. I asked them how they benefited from informing themselves in that way? And how did they come to believe that? They remained silent. They further said the ‘stick’ makes them feel scared to communicate in class, thus they do not feel free, relaxed and comfortable hence not asking the teacher where they do not understand. They said they concentrate on the stick and not the topic; therefore they pass the stick not the topic. Asking them what this meant, they said after writing the test they forget the past topic, hence failing the end of year examinations. One of them told me that,

The student: *‘That thing’ (the stick) instills fear and not discipline in us and also chases our concentration and self confidence in class away. It also creates animosity between us as students because bright students are not always beaten during lessons, so we make noise in the teacher’s absence so that they too will be beaten when the teacher comes, for they will never tell out our names otherwise we will make the school life miserable for the ‘goody-goodies’.*

I told them that, as the teacher I was so sorry that ‘the stick’ makes other students label others as ‘goody-goodies’ and sometimes chases their best friends, namely ‘concentration and self-confidence’ away; but at the same time asked them if the stick would have a place in their class if they would deny ‘Mr. Noise’ a chance to steal away their ‘educative noises’ rather than the ‘disturbing’ ones, (Chabane 1991:14) just as bright students do. They just remained silent with the smiling faces, and I took that silence as acts of deconstruction. We stopped our conversation and agreed to meet after two days because they were going to write their examinations for two consecutive days.

3.3.1 The letters written to participants

I wrote the following separate letters to reflect upon and remind them of our conversations so as to put the shared themes into a ‘permanent form’ as put in chapter 2. Again I wrote them with the aim of building on our next conversation. The first one is the one I wrote to the students and the second is that which I wrote to the teachers.

Dear students

It was great meeting you. I then thought that it would be a great idea to write what you told me about what a bad time ‘pain’ from corporal punishment brings in your lives and studies.

Girls, you strongly told me, both verbally and through non verbal cues- such as shaking your heads and rubbing your hands, how much you hate pain. But unfortunately different factors have always brought it in your lives; these factors include arriving late for the morning study, making noise in class and failure to pass

some subjects. I am therefore wondering on what type of friendship is this that you hate 'Mr. Pain' but at the same time love journeying with his bad friends such as 'noise'. You also said physical punishment creates a wall between you and your teachers; for it closes other options such as letting them sit down with you and show you the mistakes that they don't like you journeying with. Thus, the fact that teachers come to conclusions without asking you why certain behavioral problems keep coming into your school lives makes them 'label you as the problem' whereas 'the attitude' is the real problem for it brings ignorance and childish characters into your lives. You described 'attitude' as that negative feeling towards your teachers that comes as the result of, among other factors, being 'burst or shouted at' in the presence of other students for that 'burst' makes you want to retaliate by doing the same things the school doesn't approve of so as to annoy your punisher.

You said corporal punishment teams up with being verbally insulted or shouted at, and these friends convince your teachers and parents that you cannot hear/listen by only being told, hence the need to be flogged. And being not listened to invites bad friends such as 'hatred', 'feeling bored', and wanting to 'shame' your teachers. As a result, parents and teachers have got to 'hear' how you feel about the things that you are always punished for. You also said that teachers and parents take it for granted that you know what you are expected to do, whereas it is not so in most cases, therefore you need to be told what to do, rather than always be(ing) told what not to do. You said otherwise if the teacher lashes you; Mr. Attitude tells you to blame the teacher not the problem that brought you into trouble. I am therefore wondering on what is going to happen to him now that you have realized he is sometimes not a good friend. And what it is that you would like your teachers and parents to know about your friendship with 'the voices' that tell you to break the school regulations? I am

also wondering on how were you recruited into this way of thinking. That's, where and when you learnt to inform your selves in this way.

In our second conversation, in the presence of some teachers, you said you wouldn't mind being physically punished provided it is done after you have failed to achieve the things you agreed upon with your teachers. However, it should not be the only means of disciplining you for when being beaten you laugh at each other and the pain fades away. But, the 'gentle, firm and strong' words, sometimes coupled with few strokes, are hard to get erased, and make you feel like letting down your teachers if you repeat what you were told not to. And you also said the most effective and hurting punishments are; being sent home and suspended for a couple of days, being subjected to hard and tiring work in the hot sun or being denied the things you like most such as buying 'morashi le makoenya' fat cakes at break time.

You however said that teachers should never let go their 'firm and strong personalities' because the 'attitude' that circulates amongst you might overpower them. You said that good communication between you and your teachers can break the effects of 'the attitude'. I am therefore wondering on how you intend to build such relations first among yourselves so as to terminate some of its close friends such as, not concentrating in class hence failing. And you said after failing the exams Mr. Attitude tells you to hate your teachers and lie to your parents about the teachers, so as to please the parents and avoid being beaten. I am therefore wondering about what would happen if you were to tell 'Mr. Attitude' about his disruptive effects between you and your teachers and the harsh treatment he makes you exert towards your head girl; that's what would you like to let him know about how you feel about him? How would that help? After our conversations is there anything you love about him; and if there's any what is it?, How were you recruited into this way of thinking? How does it

benefit you? And by the way would you say Mr. Attitude is a mosotho or sometimes a foreigner who imposes foreign behaviors, hidden behind television, and some American based songs in you (basotho) girls, hence making you rebel against the school's regulations?

You also said that sticking to school regulations would help break the attitude. I therefore wonder what, as the completing students, would you like the remaining students to know about falling in love with Mr. Attitude ahead of the school regulations? This makes me wonder what Mr. Attitude would feel like if you were to sing him your popular song here at St. cath's \neg 'hona joale nka u hlala uaba soaba, coz usole sure' (I can terminate our love affair right now because you are so sure of yourself). Girls you further said that God loves disciplined students; and would support your being punished provided there was prior communication between you and your teachers/parents. And I am therefore wondering on what would you love the remaining students to talk about so as to challenge 'the attitude'? And how then do you plan to discipline yourselves starting from today? How do you also plan to discipline your own children in your future motherhoods? I am also wondering on what if I were to be the 'bad attitude towards elders' in your lives, what would I do to make my presence known? How would I make things worse? What times would I pick? What do you think is going to happen to Mr. Attitude now that you are aware that he hates 'peace' amongst you and your teachers? And how would that come about?, and after our conversation how do you think the 'bad attitude' has managed to worm its way between you and your teachers?

How does it feel like to know that teachers love you, and work hard to avoid your friend attitude, but to provide you with good education you need for your future? How would that knowledge and the knowledge that teachers feel unhappy about whipping

you change things for you girls? The teachers accepted that there needs to be communication prior to punishment. How does it feel like now that teachers have 'listened and acknowledged' what you had to say?

Thanks

Sir Pokothoane

Then I wrote the following letter to the teachers who participated in our conversations.

Dear teachers

Bo 'm'e (mothers) it was a great honor for me having the opportunity to listen together with you, this time around without teaching, to what our students had to say about corporal punishment. And you all sincerely took part in our discussions. I therefore felt that it was important for me to write about our conversation so that it remains in our hearts and filing systems.

Bo 'm'e, as we explored together with the students; trying to unmask the ongoing contexts that serve as support systems or breeding places that nourish student's resistance towards familial and school regulations we found out that there are different factors sustaining the problem. We also explored the effects of this problem in our lives and relations between us the teachers and the students. From what they said we discovered that this problem dates far back and has walked a long way with our school's history, and it is being passed from generation to generation within our school even before the four of us worked here. And it's deeply embedded amongst our students. We also discovered that the most prominent factor sustaining this problem is the 'bad attitude' circulating among our students. This 'boy friend' has always told

our students to 'hate, ignore, feel bored and feel like shaming us' whenever we punish them. I wonder how knowing what we are dealing with will help us as teachers overcome 'resistance' exerted by Mr. Attitude.

We also discovered that peer pressure; media, music are the breeding places for this attitude. The reason being that our culture somehow restricts us to talk about certain issues, such as sex, with our children and also makes us want to tell them what to do and not to. However, as we explored with the girls we found out that the most effective deterrents to challenge this 'powerful possessive man' are: communicating often with the students, different forms of positive reinforcements and entertainments and employing other alternative punishments. To add on that they said we should talk politely and appreciate them for they will do the same, otherwise they will hate us, and feel bored in class, hence much failure.

Bo Ma, I saw you tapping yourselves with your hands on your chests often as you talked, and I wondered if this was the sign of love. You also privileged the noun 'child' ahead of 'student'; I am therefore wondering on how does the idea of being a mother without compromising your positions as teachers help you to listen to and respect your children's/student's points of view? Again how does knowing how children think of us teachers help? I am trying to say I wonder what would happen if we can pull together to face the crises? And how do you think we can function as a team (both teachers and students) to unmask the breeding places of corporal punishment? What will happen if we can't take all the responsibility?

They said a stick hinders their learning; what does this mean to you? I mean can we teach without the stick? You said they know what is right or wrong; this makes me wonder whether we beat them with the aim of showing them what is wrong or right or

are we trying to deter them from repeating the same mistakes. How effective is corporal punishment in this era? I am saying this because they told you that they have always and are ready to maneuver it. And though not often told about, I believe they know, the school regulations and can always resist them if they so wish. You all, the three of you, said that you hate beating students but are forced by them. Are you aware of how much power they possess, because they dictate for us when to beat them; thus, they can arrive late for the assembly, make noise, insult others, they know we will beat them. So how can we deny them this power? Lastly, from our conversation with the students; is the general belief that 'children should hear through both ears and skin' still effective today?

Thanks

Sir Pokothoane

3.4 The third/last conversation

This conversation was aimed at answering some of the comments and questions I raised in the letters and 'other' issues that emerged from our discussions. I had planned to meet the teachers and the students together for the second time but failed due to the fact that the students were writing their final examinations. I therefore had a conversation with eighteen of the girls. Then after this conversation, I met with the group of fifteen teachers because this time we were joined by those who were absent in our previous conversation. I welcomed them on the basis that this work sought to be as inclusive and participative as possible.

The first question I asked the teachers in this conversation was;

Mokhele: *'Did the letter and the conversation we had with the students leave you with any new thoughts regarding corporal punishment?'*

This question was in line with one of the research's objectives of moving away from binary forms of knowing which invoke a defensive or absolute response to what is understood as 'the truth' (Burr 1995:4). This question was aimed at generating new emerging meanings about harmonious future relations and their significance for the wellbeing of all. This was done with the aim of tentatively challenging the situations nurturing corporal punishment.

Within this pursuit of challenging internalizing discourses around corporal punishment I selected the word 'noise'. From it I formed a meaning that stole the student's voices away, rather than blaming or accusing the teachers of aggression. The teachers responded positively to this question and described it as 'the generation gap' between them and their students. They referred to the students as the future generation with different experiences from theirs, and therefore acknowledged the fact that they had always never paid attention to the fact that how students behave very much depends on their experiences both at home and at school. They defined future generation as characterized by 'communication and compromise'. They acknowledged the importance of communicating with students, thus paying much focus on hearing through 'ears' for they have always privileged hearing through skin. In this sense they have to compromise without letting go their positions and listen to what students have to say.

This collaborative position was difficult however to maintain. One of the elderly teachers said that the stick was used to 'deter' a child from her mistakes but now this generation does not approve of that. She even asked me to ask one of her students who

is a teacher/colleague today what she thought. In addition to this, other teachers said the stick is also used for academic deliverance and for moral behavior. The teachers oscillated between returning to traditional beliefs and also saying that the stick is no longer effective in disciplinary practice. Thus deconstruction continued to do its work by exposing such contradiction. The teachers all agreed that discussion will help to bring the changes that are needed in their school. However, some said even though the stick is not a solution they would continue to use it in order to maintain control over the students. I sensed that their understanding was that the stick holds a position of power, which helped them maintain control. Within the research paradigm, power is understood as relational, rather than being in the hands of a person or an object (Foucault 1980:99). Thus, on how and when the learners want to yield to those in authority. It is in this sense that I asked them whether their positions do not automatically put them in control.

They said if they do not punish, the students often do things to ‘test’ them to see if they will punish them or not. They then resort to beating them anyway. This ‘test’ then becomes the very resistance that fuels the teachers’ sovereign powers to beat. I asked them whether by so doing are they not dancing to the student’s power? The teachers took time to respond to this and some remained silent. Others seemed to think that it may be better to ignore the students in order to avoid giving them attention. A few of the teachers laughed, and jokingly said

Teachers: *are we in an examination room now?*

From these different responses, some in the form of gestures, I sensed the disruptive forces of deconstruction at work, for a question presupposes a gesture. Thus, I took the silence and the laughter as the response made by some call to the ‘other’, the

practice that is hidden behind the dominant discourse (Wolfreys 1998:4). The research does not aim at doing away with old practices sustaining corporal punishment but is curious and suspicious of its effectiveness, therefore I did not condemn teachers who want to beat students, but I noted the fact that they said ‘it’s no longer effective if not coupled with hearing through the ears’ and therefore supported the ideas raised by their students.

In answering some of the questions from my letter, they said they will overcome the students’ resistance by trying to open up to and listen to the kids, however, without losing their firm and strong personalities like the students said. This was interesting in that they picked upon some of the positive meanings attached to the teachers by the students. They further agreed on alternative punishments, such as sending them home if the need arises. But they emphasized informing parents regularly about their children’s behavior. The teachers further supported the introduction of entertainment and other activities to help students enjoy life at school so that they would be less inclined to focus on unacceptable behavior. They felt that it was good knowing about how students felt about them so that they also could in turn work on their characters, such as cooling down before punishing and talking to a student for they said they hate being shouted at in the presence of others.

However, they said because of the large number of students they would prefer grouping them while talking to them about their behavior. They said they used the noun ‘child’ ahead of student because the students mean so much to them, thus with the outbreak of HIV/Aids they know that many of the students are orphaned, they therefore act like their parents and love them like their own children. Those teachers who were in our second conversation with the students further admitted that the conversation with the students was highly emotional for them, hence the reason they

kept nodding their heads and tapping their chests along with other different emotional non verbal cues.

3.4.1 Mr. Attitude: the dolphin among other fish

My final conversation with the students included eighteen learners. We discussed the letter I had written to them and reflected upon the previous conversation. One of the reflective questions I asked them was, ‘how were their relations with Mr. Attitude now that they had seen some of his destructive tactics?’ One of them told me that she would first like to tell me when the relations with the attitude began. She said that for most of them, if not all, attitude appears like a dolphin among other fish. She described it as a way of acquiring an attitude to solving problems with the teachers. She described how hard it is to settle down with the very teachers who haunt them. She used the word ‘settle’ and not ‘sit’ down with teachers. I thought maybe settling means achieving certain settled points after sitting down with teachers and I just felt like not asking them.

The metaphor of fish, dolphins and sharks is particularly interesting considering that Lesotho is a land-locked country. The student explained that the ‘fish’ in this case are different forms of behavior students tend to employ in order to try to avoid some of the unfair punishment meted out by those in authority at school. The dolphin represents a way of cocooning themselves from pain and verbal reprimands. A dolphin is a friend who throws the person out of the water when it senses the shark approaching. The cocoon refers to different self defense mechanism employed by students to resist pain from stick and being shouted at by teachers. I have never been to Durban before or read much about the behaviour of dolphins and this made me more curious about their knowledge and metaphor.

In this particular conversation I could see that the girls were not as emotional or aggressive as they had previously been. Their voices were low and calm and they did not mention retaliation. Instead they said they could not go out to purposely hurt a teacher, but they would still fight the attitude that journeys with some teachers (which is as fierce as a shark). They would fight the attitude by riding the dolphin. From this, I as the teacher could sense their vulnerability as girls within the shark-hostile patriarchal settings of home and school.

3.4.2 Mr. Attitude: the *con*

In our discussions around the dolphin, its meaning moved from a friendly defense towards ideas that it could also be foreign to them, in that Lesotho is a land-locked country and few, if any of the girls, had ever seen the sea. They went so far as to say that because of its unfamiliarity they could mistake it for a shark. For example, their protective behaviour might become a shark in dolphin's clothing. This opened up possibilities for multiple meanings. It also allowed the conversation to develop around the influence of television and its positive as well as negative effects on their outlook on the world. Television for example exposes them to alternate forms of respect that avoid corporal punishment. It did however hold contradictory beliefs that they seemed to act out. For example, they described 'attitude' as a ripe fruit of their gossips; if one student refuses a punishment from the teacher, other students would later gather round her and say '*go gal ehlile u monepile*' (go on girl, you have done the right thing, that's the treatment he or she deserved). On the other hand when the same student is punished others would laugh at her, creating a confusion and contradiction in discourses.

The conversation allowed awareness of these positive and negative sides of Mr. Attitude who had for a long time ‘conned, confused, contrived, confined and convinced’ (Epston 2000:228) them into believing that he was Mr. Right. Mr. Attitude was at the same time hiding his oppressive features that bring confusion. Mr. Attitude also seemed to be somewhat counter-productive to the students as it fed into the prevailing belief that students are not responsible and should not be listened to. This in itself created considerable ‘stress and conflict’. Epston (2000:230) refers to this as ‘*con*’ for he never connects but confuses.

3.5 Conclusion

Our deconstructive conversations paved way for the emergence of different themes. I have selected four themes in line with the aims of this research to challenge corporal punishment as an absolute life giving way of punishing learners. I selected texts where there seemed to be a strong collective comment from the participants; the texts that demystified corporal punishment as a system and opened way for emergence of alternate ways of punishing; the text that helped us to externalize the problem from the participants and the texts that deconstructed the system through gestures, such as the girls saying ‘yes’ and teachers banging their chests. These themes are discussed and analyzed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: The research analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the selected themes on the languaged discourses in which the participants, including myself, exposed ourselves through the evaluation and critique on the effectiveness of corporal punishment. The analysis of these discourses is being done on the impact of corporal punishment on participants. This chapter analyses the power relationships with each other (teacher to student relations) and among students, and on how they have come to view themselves as the result of being spanked (stories about themselves). The chapter concludes with some of the implications for the student's future/preferred ways of being disciplined.

I have selected themes from the participant's texts that contradict the teacher's settled assumptions that learners' mistakes call for spanking. I have also selected themes that challenge the learners' negative ways of thinking about and behaving towards their teachers and the beliefs that supported such ways of behaving. These include the themes in which both learners and teachers re-iterate the importance of including learners' voices in disciplinary issues, rather than treating them as detached objects by either their teachers or the oppressive God cited by those in authority. I have also selected the themes that expose the teachers' subjugation within the system.

In this chapter I privilege my own voice through the lens of the theories I have used. The texts/themes are generally short and specifically extracted for the powerful discourses embedded within them. I use the discourse analyses as a data analysis method to analyze the meanings around the texts/themes presented rather than the

hard facts of a qualitative enquiry. For the analysis I shorten these themes into four headings, under which the selected texts appear.

- The first theme I selected is ‘listening to learners in a respectful way’.
- The second theme is ‘the role of the head girl in different power identities’.
- The third theme is detaching hot tempers from a teacher’s identity.
- The last theme is ‘God the communicative disciplinarian’.

4.2 Theme one/Listening to learners voices in a respectful way.

4.2.1 The ears as part of skin designed to only hear the uttered.

‘Teachers must sit down with us (talk nicely) and show us our mistakes so as to detach a person from their mistakes’, said the learners.

The dominant discourse within this research is that children should obey their seniors without question. Within the deconstructive frame of this research, an alternate text is embedded within the dominant one (Gergen 1991:146; Besley 2001:86). The above statement exposes the contradictions embedded within this belief system. The learners are suggesting to their teachers in this text that they too would like to be respected and listened to, rather than being objects of the teachers’ power. This indicates that the taken-for-granted assumption that children should be passive receivers of discipline is not always true.

It is also a deconstructive sign that teachers and those in authority have not created a context where enough space, effort and time to listen to learners' voices are privileged. However, embedded within the text is an alternate story of talking respectfully to one another. The teachers have often privileged listening to own taken for granted voices informing them that learners have got to hear through the skin. This discards alternate beliefs that are equally valid within their cultural structure. This returns the relationship between teachers and learners to what is considered the status quo, or what is referred to in this research as the dominantly oppressive discourse. By returning to the status quo, however, the teachers are met with resistance and non-cooperation, thus not achieving their targets for achievement. This is backed up by another text where a teacher says 'we have to nurse our aching bodies the following day after lashing the learners'. However, by using these words the learners themselves begin the deconstructive acts of suggesting 'other' ways of communicating with them that have often been difficult for dominant power discourses. This talking nicely within a Derridian context is already present within many practices and by foregrounding it, old dominant practices that the learners consider unhelpful and abusive become challenged, opening the way for some of the subjugated practices that are already held within culture (Besley 2001:84; Freedman & Combs 1996:46; Wolfreys 1998:4; Gergen 1991:146; Foucault 1980:98);.

Talking nicely with students, although it implies that within the text and cultural discourse there is the possibility to 'talk nicely', becomes a challenge to the central and privileged power position of not listening to learner's voices. The word 'nicely' has multiple meanings. For instance, it suggests a call to deal tentatively with mistakes, through discussion rather than spanking. This in turn could well benefit the teachers for they face less resistance from the learners, and hopefully enjoy more co-operation.

The pupils' use of the word 'mistake' opens a space for both teachers and learners to address 'mistakes' together through talking together in mutually respectful ways that do not lead to corporal punishment. This means that it is through language that the word mistake, which holds multiple meanings, can be exposed and pointed out by both teachers and learners. This unmasking of mistakes leads to the emergence of the 'other' that is ever possible through conversational interactional powers. It is in this way that discipline gets understood as a result of making meaning as a group or society (Kotzé and Kotzé 1998, Gergen and Gergen 1991, Burr 1995)

4.2.2 Teacher's understanding of control and discipline.

'I use it (the stick) to be in control', said one teacher.

From the above statement, a teachers' perspective of spanking is used to maintain control over learners in a power relationship that is not equal. The conversations between students and teachers not only exposed this unequal power relationship, but also demonstrated some of the assumptions that the teachers have made about what it means to discipline students (Anderson 1993:304; Foucault 1980:97). In the above text for example the construction of knowledge around corporal punishment has often excluded other equally accepted cultural practices around respect such as talking nicely with learners rather than striving to be in control through the help of the stick.

The above text therefore exposes the taken-for-granted dominant narrative within traditional structures of authority that power lies in teacher's hands. Within a Foucauldian frame this is not true, because power is always in relationship with resistance. In this way it makes the subjugating assumption that power can be located

or localized inside the body of the pupils or their teachers (Epston 1993:171 in Freedman & Combs 1996:48). From the selected words thus far it is clear that power is held within the relationship between learners and teachers rather than in an object/stick. This statement therefore exposes the weaker webs of discourses that have blinded teachers from the awareness that being in control is ever articulable because of learners for they constitute that which is different and not equal to their disciplining powers.

A teacher therefore could not be in control if there were no students; it is their presence that automatically grants a teacher a higher power position within the relationship, for it creates relations from which power operates. This therefore marks the fact that teachers and learners are vehicles through which power operates (Foucault 1980:98). Being in control becomes a product of power relations and does not require a teacher's mouth or stick to defend it. Once the power is seen and understood within the relationship, the problem moves away from the person towards the discursive relationship, which in this research is being challenged in order to afford both parties greater freedom to achieve their goals.

4.2.3 Learners' understanding of control and discipline

'That thing (the stick) instills fear and not the discipline in us and also chases our concentration and self confidence in class away' (a learner).

'We live in the era different from yours and teachers got to understand how it dictates us to live whether beaten or not', (a learner).

Within a discourse analysis, a stick is understood in this research as holding a meaning that relates to the larger discourse (Foucault 1980:98); Gergen 1991:110). It is interesting that the students describe the ‘stick’ as a thing. This ‘thing’ to them belongs to the larger discourse that works against their will to learn and pass well. Thus, it deprives them their right to learn by instilling fear.

By referring to the stick as a thing and comparing it to this era could mean that to them it is an old fashioned entity irrelevant and not effective in this era. It could also mean something that prevents their teachers from listening to them, an object without ears, love and compassion which mothers have. In this sense, it substitutes these good qualities their teachers, most of whom are females, have. This then becomes a sub-text embedded in the assumption, and gives an alternate possibility of engaging with the teachers rather than the stick. This learners’ understanding of the stick as something negative and punitive in this way also contradicts holding onto an ethic of reciprocity rather than fear and feeling as on the outside (Quirk-Tootell in (Law 1998:62). These discursive readings then open up possibilities of alternate relationships between the teachers and learners.

‘We will listen to media’, said the learners.

Discourses embedded in this text unmask media as another form of relational power that presents learners with different forms of respect to resist punishment. There is an assumption here that the media includes pupils witnessing different ways of behaving within a Western Culture on televisions, newspapers and on the internet such as face book. In this reading, listening to media becomes a part of the resistance to the dominance of traditional discipline and punishment.

These alternative ways of responding to corporal punishment act as a dolphin among other fish to learners. They described the dolphin as the friendly alternative that saves them from punishment, or a shark attack. For instance, as learners resist (Foucault 1980:99) the punishments of being shamed in front of other pupils, they gather their forces from media through practices of gossip and laughter about a teacher. The teacher in turn, is intimidated by such media oriented practices and beliefs that their ‘bad behaviour’ is due to the bad influence of the western media. When under threat the teacher returns to seeking control in a polarized position of duality (Louw 1998:31). Within a narrative deconstructive frame this polarized ‘blame’ position is moved to external forces or objects like a stick, or pain, or fish or dolphin. This opens a possibility for a different relational discourse to emerge between teacher and pupil.

4.3 Participants’ alternative knowledges around discipline

4.3.1 A silent shout

‘We hate pain, and teachers should not associate us with pain, said the learners.

‘We love you, and don’t gain any pleasure in lashing you’, said the teachers.

The disruptive acts of deconstruction from these texts expose that both parties have been internally suffering and experiencing their own subjugation by the dominant discourses that call for punitive discipline within the system. The system in this instance compromised both the teachers as well as the learners’ ability to find alternate ways of respectful discipline. In Foucauldian terms both teachers and learners became passive recipients of the dominant system of discipline (Foucault

1980:98). The system itself in this instance closed doors for learner's sufferings to be voiced.

This means that teachers have often felt the need to punish because the system within which they have been raised requires them to. One such expectation is the parents' expectation of a teacher to be a 'fixer' (Watson in Law 1998:8). For instance, one parent who came to our school complained that nowadays teachers no longer spank learners, placing enormous responsibility upon the shoulders of the teachers. The teachers are in subjugation to the fear that if they don't spank they will not be in control of the expected discipline. The teachers are also under enormous pressure to deliver academic results. If they do not deliver the system blames them. However, it is clear from the selected texts that such disciplinary measures often do not have the desired effect.

The very thing the teachers want for the students is 'success' and yet it is operating against them. Thus, the destructive operating powers are sustained by a power relationship that in which teachers become agents of potentially abusive practices powered by a discourse of entitlement to 'truth' and knowledge.

4.3.2 The generation gap: the teachers' alternative understanding of discipline.

'We will listen to the kids, though they are many', said the teachers.

This text marks the participants' arrival at a more respectful communication or collaborative voice. It becomes an inter-subjectively constructed care, (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7) and a non-patronizing participation (Bons-Storm 2001 in Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:8). Even though means of achieving a respectful communication seemed to

differ, the participants explored this as an effective way to disqualify the authority gained by the problem that has often subjected learners to corporal punishment and a negative attitude; and teachers to aching bodies after punishing them.

The privileging of the word ‘kids’ ahead of ‘students’ marks an alternate meaning around the teachers’ perception of a person of a learner. In the informal pilot study the teachers privileged the word ‘child’ ahead of a learner/student. The words ‘kids’ and ‘child’ open up alternative meanings, such as caring, protecting or loving. These alternate meanings could well be present in the teachers’ practices both at home as well as at school, although they may remain non-dominant or subjugated knowledges. These alternatives indicate the disruption of dominant beliefs and allow for enough contradiction to begin generation of new genealogies of knowledge from the multiple meanings held within any one word.

4.3.3 The learners’ alternative understanding of discipline

‘Teachers should not let go their firm and strong personalities’ (learners).

In as much as the pupils wanted change, it appears from this statement that they also seek continuity. Once the anger and strong voices that are heard earlier in this chapter are tamed, alternate voices are heard in this text. The pupils themselves begin to see the teachers as people who are trying to do a job and the words suggest the beginning of an alliance with the teachers against the problem of ‘mistakes’. The learners refer to teachers as people who were once learners themselves, making mistakes and getting punished. In this text the learners begin to suggest that the teachers continue with an attitude that journeys with the learners in a strong and firm way. The learners

acknowledge these qualities from teachers, thus building a different structure for discipline coupled with respect.

Alternate meanings around the words ‘firm’ and ‘strong’ emerge showing an ability to practice discipline in a mutually acceptable way (Kotzé 2001:3; Kotzé 2002:4). This moves the learners to respect teachers who are able to lead in a firm and strong way without resorting to punitive measures. It also moves the learners to a place of responsible behaviour where they become accountable for their own performance.

4.4 Theme two: the head girl in different identities but within same power position.

The head girl within this research process was placed in a difficult position between ‘siding’ with the teachers and aligning herself with the learners. This exposed the Foucauldian understanding that power never lies in any one's hands, but rather human beings serve as ‘vehicles of power’ and not points of its application (Foucault 1980:98). This is coupled with Derridian reading that the disruptive forces of deconstruction are ever present in every dominant discourse, (Wolfe 1998:7).

4.4.1 Naming the problem: Mr. Attitude

‘These guys have a bad attitude that circulates among them sir’, said the head girl.

The discursive reading of the above statement is that the discourses sustaining her power position as head girl have forced her to align herself with the dominant powers of the school, thereby labeling other learners as having ‘attitude’ to those in authority (Foucault 1980:105). This links to the hierarchical discourse of the school in which

learners are prone to mistakes or sins, hence the need for confrontational sanctification. She further confronted the learners and pointed her finger to reprimand them, '*yes guys I have seen that you hate directives*'. However, this discursive web, just like others, has some weaker points. These weaker webs were exposed when the teachers were not present. The gaps and spaces afforded her an alternate power relationship in which she aligned herself for a moment with the learners who had earlier blamed the parents and the school as the problem. This contradiction means that she too saw teachers, parents and the school as the problem, thereby locating the problem between both parties. From this reading, both parties have contributed in sustaining the problem.

Mentioning of the word '*circulates*' further unmasked the ever present acts of deconstruction (Foucault 1980:98). In this case, resistance as the ascending form of power circulates among the learners. The attitude becomes the restraint towards mutual agreements between teachers and students. Attitude reveals one of its oppressive tactics as that of informing learners to 'shout' at the head girl whenever she tells them what the school administration or one of the teachers has said.

There are other examples of Mr. Attitude further restraining the students and those in authority from talking with one another in mutually respectful ways. For example the administration and teachers seem to have communicated more with the head girl, and class prefects sometimes, at the expense of other learners. As a result, other learners have been physically punished for they exerted their ascending powers to make their own voices to be heard by '*shouting at her*', hence resisting that which they were not part of.

4.4.2 Separated from others by own position and Mr. Attitude

'It's better to be mistreated by a teacher rather than other students because we spend much of our time together', said the learners.

They further went on to say, *'we will make school life difficult for the goody-goodies'*.

Alliance is a powerful tool that allows people to stand together. However, in this text alliance is often referred to as an alliance of learners against teachers. As I have argued throughout this document, such power relations generally have a negative effect on both learners as well as teachers, in that resistance worms its way from such fragmentations (Foucault 1980:99). In the above text resistance as power has joined the learners together and acted as a comfort solution from the pain induced by corporal punishment. It thus, helped them find ways that make them less vulnerable to pain. However, it also feeds back into the polarized position and the dominant discourse which this research challenges

On the other hand, the same alliance has at times separated the head girl from other learners. The discursive webs of power sustaining this alliance exclude the head girl because her duties and power position separate her from this unity. This could be because she is often called and entrusted by the teachers and sometimes forced to give out the names of those who harass others, subjecting them to spanking. The above statement also marks the emergence of the head girl's long time subjugated voice (Besley 2001:76; Foucault 1980:83). It isolates her from other learners and excludes her from 'mgozy' (the romantic girl talk) and other close friendships.

‘...it (the stick) also creates animosity between us as the students because bright students are not always beaten during the lessons, so we make noise in the teacher’s absence so that they too will be beaten when the teacher comes...’ (the learners).

The above text further exposes the fact that it is not only the head girl who gets excluded (Foucault 1998:131) but also other learners, mostly those performing well in class. The teachers in this sense are fighting a losing battle; the very discipline that is designed to enhance the students’ learning, is achieving the opposite effect, particularly on those who are considered not ‘bright’ in class. It is from this binary that the ‘conflicts’ worm their way amongst the learners due to being spanked, thereby creating divisions among them. From this division the ‘not so- performing well’ learners become jealous of those who achieve academic success. They then resist their success by making a noise in class, so that they all get into trouble when a teacher comes.

4.4.3 A discursive analysis of the head girl’s letter’

This is the discursive analysis of the head girl’s letter in which she aligns with other learners.

‘Actions speak louder than words... It has to be proven that teachers love us,...if teacher’s love is proven to learners then Mr. Attitude would be given the first name ‘positive’... well this does not mean that all of us will be little angels, there is no fun in that right?’, said the head girl in her letter.

‘Actions speak louder than words’, (the head girl).

From this contradictory and strongly emotional stance it is evident that she believes it is not enough for teachers to only say '*they love students*' without concrete actions. Within this discourse analysis the above statement (actions speak louder than words) has multiple meanings. For instance, she was calling for alternate meanings of 'love' from that of emotional teachers tapping their breasts without tapping learners' with concrete actions such as sitting down with them. Or she could be implying that corporal punishment on its own, without respectful communication, is not an act of love in learners' eyes.

'If teachers' love is proven to learners then Mr. Attitude would be given the first name Positive'. She further suggests that in Mr. Positive Attitude's regime 'the good deeds would over power the bad and neutralize them, hence having not so good students, but at least not bad ones'.

The head girl used the above statements to expose the effects of mutual relations (Kotzé 2002:4) which would be a proof of a teachers' love towards learners. She further hypothesizes the power relations in our school are enhanced by a positive attitude of learners. She however, does not sweep aside the fact that mistakes and misunderstandings will also be there between teachers and learners because of the different factors such as different levels of understandings for power is also never equal. It is also possible that by the time she wrote this letter she was accustomed to externalizing conversations. In this sense, though unaware, she was able to separate the problem from other learner's identity. She is moving away from labeling students as 'bad' towards labeling the *deeds* as either good or bad.

Her suggestion that learners who do good deeds would overpower and neutralize those journeying with the bad or negative attitude, implies that the school would be able to

move away from the labels of the bad students or sinners. The positive power relations however depend very much on a mutually respectful relationship with the teachers and because the power relationship is unequal those in authority need to initiate this. The head girl speaks of Mr. Positive Attitude as a connective understanding, of the self-other and inter-subjective care.

‘There is bad and evil in the world’ (the head girl)

The head girl explains the diversity in learners’ characters by the above statement and perhaps the protective function of the school structure in attempting to keep the girls from bad and evil in the world, which could of course include the media and the contamination of loose living as seen in the world.

This statement also challenges the very discourses informing a basotho mothers’ ways of loving; she connects mothering to teaching, opening up different opportunities for ‘loving’. This alternate way of loving suggested by the head girl contradicts the commonly taken for granted knowledge among many rural basotho women that ‘beating’ or ‘spanking’ has to do with love and caring, hence *bo ‘m’e selibeng* (women who have gone to the well to fetch some water) would gladly show others the deep marks of whip due to being beaten by the husband the previous night. In this case if the husband no longer beats the wife she believes that then he is having an affair and no longer cares about her. However, this commonly shared cultural mentality does not resonate with the experiences of these urban girls. Unfortunately, teachers, who are the dispensers in this instance within the power relationship of discipline, are blinded by their own reproduction of violence.

‘Well this does not mean that all of us will be little angels, there would be no fun in that right?’ (the head girl).

A Derridian reading of this text allows for multiple readings of being human, as opposed to being perfect. The head girl is perhaps challenging her own binary positions that keep changing, allowing for more flexibility as the letter continues. This opens possibilities of alternate practices based on having fun, laughter, not being perfect angels.

4.4.4 Power of externalizing the problem

‘We won’t go out and hurt a teacher intentionally, but we fight the attitude journeying with such a teacher, (learners)

‘We would like to inform parents often about their children’s behaviour’ (teachers)

Through narrative ways of externalizing the problem from the person (teacher or pupil) (Morgan 2000:17, Freedman & Combs 1996:47-48), both students and teachers were able to work more constructively with their relationship in mutually beneficial ways. The first statement takes away the blame from the teachers and allows them the opportunity to view the problem as something that can be looked at together by both pupils and teachers. This marks one of the research’s aims to expose, together with the participants, the oppressive effects sustaining corporal punishment. This awareness helped to make it easier for them to challenge ‘his’ (the problem) restraining authority such as working hard to shame a teacher or feeling bored. It is then in this new understanding, that they became aware that they had often found themselves caught

up in the webs of ‘gossips’ both positive and negative. As said in my letter to the learners, sometimes gossips have forced them to hate some teachers and lie to the parents about such teachers so as to please the parents. On the other hand the gossips had their own strengths in uniting learners.

This alternative understanding also enabled teachers to hypothesize on new ways of dealing with learners besides using corporal punishment, such as introducing entertaining activities. Viewing disciplinary issues in this new alternative territory helped teachers to challenge spanking as an absolute disciplining technique. In this way, Mr. Con or Mr. Attitude’s manipulative power structures within our school that had often defined ‘truth’ and ‘right’ through generations of knowledge are unmasked (Ransom 1997 in Epston 2000:231). These powers have, for a long time, contradicted emancipatory struggle where by both teachers and students could recognize and name ways of being that are disruptive of oppressive old patterns of knowledge and discipline control (Davies 1996:6 in Epston 2000:231). For instance, teachers emphasized informing parents often about their children’s behaviour, and this contradicts punishing in order to be ‘*in control*’ as said by some teachers. In this sense, informing parents is still another way of being in control.

4.5 Theme three: detaching hot tempers from the teachers’ identity.

The teachers, as well as the students, are affected by the instability of their tempers. Hot tempers, fueled by anger, have often managed to force teaches to spank learners, perhaps against their better judgements, thus depriving them of a respectful relationship with the learners and leaving them nursing aching arms due to spanking.

4.5.1 Teachers should pay attention to the log in their own eyes.

‘The teachers should work on their tempers, thus cool down before punishing us, because teachers with high emotions make us hostile while those humble make us humble ourselves’, (the learners)

The above statement is perhaps a rather bold attempt to show that the pupils are aware of the teachers, not just as objects of power (Foucault 1980:98), but as people who can be damaged by temper, thus compromising the girls’ respect for them. From the above text, learners are not describing their teachers as cruel or full of anger, but are saying they should work on their tempers before punishing. The pupils themselves take upon themselves a voice of awareness and empowerment. It also indicates that the pupils themselves have a respect for the teachers, if only tempers did not disrupt this respect.

The same externalizing text exposes that the teachers’ emotions, coupled with the settled certainty that learners need to hear through the skin, have had the power to both blind and disqualify the teachers’ knowledge of alternate practices that do not work with blame or aggression (Besley 2001:76). There was another text in our second conversation however where the teachers suggested talking to parents, and giving learners a voice. They even went further to say *‘they would prefer to settle down with the kids’*. However, the power of the dominant discourse has left them resorting to the disciplinary techniques with which they too had been raised. It appears that temper played a role in moving them back to old practices.

In this reading learners are aware that ‘anger’ has frequently managed to manipulate their teachers’ cool states of mind, which has in turn seen learners becoming its victims by journeying with boredom, hatred and retaliation.

4.5.2 Anger as power

‘...Cool down before punishing us, because teachers with high emotions make us hostile while those humble make us humble ourselves’ (learners)

The discursive power reading of the above text is that power relations have both negative and positive effects. As a result anger as power produces both relational effects. From the above statement it is exposed that discourses sustaining anger as power, if not externalized or challenged, are capable of forcing people to act and behave as such discourses dictate. Thus in their subjugating mission, they can make a person either hostile or humble, thereby performing under its subjugating articulation (Foucault 1980:98).

‘Burst at us or insult us and we will do the same to annoy you’ (learners)

Anger and impulsive punishment have played their roles in spanking as a practice to gain control. The teachers then forget the school rules in the heat of the moment (Foucault 1980:98). The defined rules disappear in the dense discourses of hot tempers from both teachers and learners, frustrating both teachers and learners attempts to achieve good results.

Shouting at the learners has also not achieved the results the teachers hoped for. It has rather brought about great experiences of vulnerability of learners in the hands of teachers. Learners have resisted the shouting by arriving late for assembly and disrupting classes by making noise. They also look to blame the teachers for failing subjects. *‘we some times lie to our parents about the teachers so as to avoid punishment’*

‘We need to be respected so that we will do the same; but if not insult us and we will do the same’, (learners).

‘Respect’, as a social construct is deeply relational, as can be seen in the number of times it has been used in this research.

The above text, *‘we need to be respected and we will do the same’*, is a revelation that much of how learners behave at school depends very much on the state of relations between them and their teachers (Gergen 1991:110; Foucault 1980:98). It therefore exposes the possibility that in some cases teachers’ conduct and the manner of talking to learners dictate how learners respond to teachers. This practice becomes self-perpetuating until it gets abandoned in favour of alternate practices that can benefit both teachers and learners. Then in this way the respect discourses are sustained.

4.6 Theme four/God: the communicative disciplinarian

4.6.1 Teachers hiding behind the reformed and confrontational approaches.

‘God loves disciplined students and would support our being punished provided we intentionally failed to do what was agreed upon between us and our parents or our teachers, (learners)

The central theme of the above statement is around the ‘agreement’ (understood as connective understanding (Kotzé 2002:4) in this work) between the teachers and the learners. As exposed throughout this chapter, this agreement involves ‘talking with rather than talking at’ learners, sitting down with them, listening to their voices, hence

‘a respectful communication’ that both teachers and learners privileged in our conversations. This is in line with a participative theology and pastoral response. This respectful communication contradicts a total obedience to power without discussion, for it has subjected learners to teacher’s confrontational power. This total obedience to power without discussion or agreement has created a moral subject to learners as the targeted group (Foucault 1980:7).

However, these powers have also subjugated both parties, because teachers have often failed to reach the required results due to stiff resistance from learners. The theological interpretation of this stance deconstructs the multiple meanings around the word ‘support’ from the above text. It may mean that, at the present moment God does not support their being punished because it is not based on their failure to fulfill the agreed upon. He does not support it also because their ‘intentions’ to hurt the teachers are not in breach of any agreement as it was never made. Therefore ill disciplined students would be those that breach the covenant, but the fact that there was no covenant made in this case denies identifying them as such because they would have acted differently and that difference would have made them be labeled as the ‘other’ ill-disciplined children or sinners.

4.6.2 God: keeps to the respectful communication

‘God... would support our being punished provided we intentionally failed to do what was agreed upon...’ (Learners)

The learners’ central theme in this text is that God loves disciplined students, who keep to the agreed disciplinary covenant. The assumption is that he communicates often with his people before punishing them and learners believe that teachers should

do the same. There is a further assumption in this text that God has not been separated from the belief system of the school and is freely talked about within the conversation. This is in contrast to more western systems which have become more and more secular in their beliefs around God.

These learner blaming discourses are fragile and have created a tension and binary on who is right, powerful and has a right to fix (Watson 1998 in Law 1998:8; Foucault 1979:83), thereby forcing teachers to use their confessional powers to force learners to confess. While on the other hand learners silently resisting to yield to sanctification brought by spanking. In this case, the confession and sanctification brought about by the stick does not fit well with the learners' theological disciplining measures. By so doing learners take it that their teachers have sinned as a result they do the same. That is, if a teacher shames one of them, that particular learner will work hard to shame a teacher in one way or another, *'insult us and we will do the same'*.

4.6.3 Consultation: the responsive key to success

'Here at school a child and a student are not treated like a person because just like animals we are hardly consulted and everything is done unto us. ...And by the way we are not small children but high school students', said the learners.

Participation is not a linear process. Earlier in the chapter the participants moved towards language where blame and anger shifted towards reciprocal responsibility. As can be seen from this selected text, polarization and blame continued to dominate the research process, making it difficult to entertain and sustain alternate realities which are present in the texts. This polarization and blame are relations that call for a

respectful communication of all stakeholders for they ‘claim responses’ (Ackerman 1996:45); (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7). To reach that self-other-connective understanding (Kotzé 2002:4) as a response, the research unpacked these ‘girl child’ silencing relations, ‘*we are hardly consulted*’, through the participatory feminist practice so as to allow learners to find their voice. This position also accommodated the female teachers who took part in this work, for as seen throughout this work, they are also subjugated by the parents, and governments’ expectations.

From the above text the learners lament exclusion and long time silence in matters around discipline by those in power positions. From this assumption, for instance, ‘*feeling treated like an animal*’ of these girl children due to not being consulted has different meanings and marks the existence of oppressive multiple factors both at home and at school. For instance, this way of thinking about themselves has come as a result of not being treated like married brothers who are always consulted.

It also marks the tension brought by their awareness that they feel they are old enough to be consulted whereas parents and teachers feel the opposite. It further marks the discrepancy between parent-teacher and the learners’ understanding of ‘the high school learner and her duties’ ‘*we are not small children but high school students*’. In this way it exposes that teachers and parents have to look ‘anew’ (Bird 2004:29) at how they have constructed ‘a person of a high school level’. The reason being that, to learners being in high school marks ‘a responsible stage worthy of consulting those within’. Again, to them being a ‘person’ means being consulted and doing things ‘with’ rather than unto them; ‘*at school a child and a student are not treated like a person...because we are hardly consulted*’.

Their understanding of being treated like animals is a strong statement that appears to mark their suffering which ‘evokes a religious response’ (Graham 1999:187). It is in this way that the narrative feminist nature of this work is a responsive praxis to a transformative challenge of doing and discussing with learners rather than spanking them prior these factors. It exposes the authentic theological discourses of not consulting learners as normative discourses that have made the stick an unquestioned authentic ‘fixer’. These statements mark the disruptive forces of deconstruction exposing the weak and already worn out ‘webs’ of the net relations of power. Thus, these weak points expose where learners feel most vulnerable due to how they feel their identity being swallowed into the larger discourse encompassed by less communication. In this the learners take a great deal of risk.

4.6.4 From restriction to freedom

‘...we should not always be told what the bible tells us ‘not’ to do. Instead be motivated about what to do and what the bible tells us to do. And what we do needs to be appreciated by the school’ (the head girl)

The inclusion of the word ‘always’ from the above statement indicates the learners’ very strong feelings on this matter and probably reflects the way the teachers speak to the students which is prescriptive, correctional and confrontational in nature (Louw 1998:28). This cannot be divorced from the dominant reformed and confrontational theological discourses which prevail and support the teachers’ striving to tell, fix and correct learners by telling them that which the bible prohibits (Louw 1998:25). However, this does not support the intended results for it largely fails to motivate the learners. For example the head girl goes so far as to suggest that the students will be

motivated by being told what the bible and teachers tell them to do. This assumption does not allow for other ways of relating that are not based on a top down approach.

This kind of talking or telling is at odds with the idea that both learners and teachers need space for mutually respectful communication that is non-confrontational and blame-ridden (Kotzé 2001:2; 2002:4, 9; Kotzé & kotzé 2001:7). This is an emergence of a pleading voice that teachers should see them as also having some knowledge around the disciplinary issues, and that they too can find interpretations for the bible.

Focusing on what learners should ‘not’ do, re-enforces the negative rather than the positive in the students, the sinner rather than the person created in the image of God. Within this discourse the person becomes labeled as difficult, or bad. This allows very little space for alternate descriptions focusing on the person, who is simply human. A participatory theology moves outside of blaming a person towards the effects of our actions on both ourselves and others within a relationship

4.6.5 From bi-polarity to participatory

‘... We are your parents and you have to listen to us’ said one of the teachers.

But there was correlation of power as one of the learners said *‘...you also have to understand how the world around us dictates us to live whether beaten or not’*.

The above conflicting voices from teachers and learners expose the struggle for disciplining power between teachers and learners. They expose that teachers feel the need to protect and discipline learners in a certain way while learners prefer the opposite. Neither of these positions is conducive for a deeper participation in

responsibility. For example, teachers assume that being parents automatically grants them power to be listened to. On the other hand, learners become defensive and potentially disrespectful of authority. These polarized positions remain in negotiation with one another, as in a correlational or bipower relationship (Louw 1998:31). A participatory theology seeks to move outside of this polarity by finding alternate beliefs that can be both sustainable and life-giving.

'We love you just as we love our own children' said the teachers.

The above statement on teachers' love for the learners marks the participants' arrival at the 'connective understanding' (Kotzé 2001:3) and 'self-other' narratives enhanced by the relational feminist theological powers brought about by the respectful relations between the clergy/teachers and the nameless/female learners. In this way they theologically collaborated instead of being polarized.

4.6.6 Give us a cheerful assembly

'The word of God should be coupled with some motivational speakers at the assembly to cheer us up every morning so that we would think about and meditate on positive things all day. This would make us enjoy attending the assembly for some of us are always whipped for arriving late and playing during the prayer', said the deputy head girl.

The above statement is a challenge on the non-motivational oppressive effects of a more prescriptive kerygmatic approach to the bible (Weadon 1987:40; Louw 1998:25). It is a call for alternative readings and handling of the word of God at the morning assembly on the assumption that the bible has no one prescriptive meaning,

For instance, it may mean a person whose motivational words help learners think positively about their studies ‘all day long’, and this is what teachers and spanking fail to do. On the other hand it could open the door for more prescriptions about how the students ‘should’ behave. Within the participatory frame of this research, these prescriptions are unlikely to alter the discourse of ‘telling’ rather than ‘talking with’. This therefore, calls for teachers to open space for learners’ inputs on how to run the morning assembly for learners love and know God who favours communication. This way of praying can deny ‘spanking’ enough space to worm its way between teachers and learners.

The deputy head girl appears to be looking for a different way of engaging in a situation where girls are not motivated in assembly. The prefects are frustrated at being expected to keep ‘law and order’ in a context that is limited in its effectiveness at motivating the students to succeed. This top down approach does not foster responsible behaviour among the students or give learners a sense of agency and authenticity in disciplinary issues. Instead they tend to fall victims of being spanked or told to keep quiet during prayer.

If the deputy head girl is to be seriously listened to, this offers up an opportunity for all the stakeholders to discuss the way morning prayers are conducted. In this way, the morning prayers for example, could be seen as a collective responsibility and not as a form of preaching handed down to them by a distant God that rebukes and confronts and fixes them (Louw 1998:25). This confrontation contradicts the head girl’s call, that *‘what we do as students needs to be appreciated by the school’*.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has analyzed the deconstruction of dominant stories or restraining narratives around corporal punishment as a way of disciplining basotho students. It further analyzed the voices of learners that emerged in contradiction to the dominant discipline story. Some of the unique outcomes were explored, privileging these subjugated discourses in the hope of finding alternate territories for disciplinary practices. This in turn helped learners construct new meanings from their experiences of being punished and shamed. It further used the new meanings to hypothesize future steps around disciplining learners in our school.

Chapter 5: A time in future surrounded by safety for all

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the research question and aims have been addressed and also exposes some limitations of this limited study by suggesting the ‘other’ alternative territories that could have also been explored. It also explores how some findings might be helpful in creating an audience for our achieved new co-constructed disciplining means as care not punishment. It suggests that there is a place for an audience, or an outsider witness group that can build on new ways of finding discipline that do not fall into binary opposition. This could involve fellow teachers, parents and different groups of people outside our school but with interest. The conversations I had with the participants convinced me of the need to recruit and make other people an audience or share new ways of knowing so that our work does not suffer exclusion. It calls for all groups to assume responsibility and reflect on the effectiveness of their disciplining ways and more importantly to give this work a firmer stance.

As much as it tries to validate the participants’ alternative ways of working, it is curious of our (participants’) own subtle ways, often hidden out of our sight, in trying to challenge restraining effects of spanking in our school, thus subtly reproducing oppressive practices. It comments on the potential oppressive influences of learner disciplining practices based on basotho patriarchal notions of power practiced by teachers, confessional and fundamentalist theological and pastoral powers and their biased restraining effects on learners and teachers as well. As such, the chapter comments on the acts of deconstruction on hearing through ears and skin as our metaphorical dominant narrative.

5.2 Findings

Corporal punishment as a disciplinary technique may have enhanced and sustained discipline in most schools in Lesotho in the past. As a result, it proved effective and has for a long time gained the status of being an unquestioned certainty. However, in recent years, the emergence of fragmentations (due to different forms of resistance exerted by learners towards those practicing, as well as greater awareness within media, the government ministries) marks the effects, in a Derridian way, of disruptive forces of deconstruction at work. This has called for the ‘other’, that which is present but not yet dominant. It calls for a need to look at it from a new angle for corporal punishment has already been dismantled (Wolfreys 1998:18).

It has been exposed throughout this research that an individual disappears into the dense network of socially constructed discourses that support the dominant group or disciplining practices. In the same way, in this journey I realized that teachers are not immune to this subjugation, for they have also been forced to spank learners in an attempt to measure up to the constitutive discourses on individual teacher’s identity that have created or constructed a great teacher as one who can teach and ‘fix’. This was evident in our second conversation when they said to learners, *‘we gain no joy in lashing you...we love you as we love our own kids’*. This teacher went on to say that the expectations placed upon her make it hard for her to use or think of other ways of disciplining children both at home and at school. These powerful disciplining and controlling discourses, through their anti-negotiation tactics, pave way for conflicts and negative resistance between teachers and learners. It was in challenging this binary that this research created the self-other, connective understanding to help the

participants move beyond self blame and retaliation to a more ‘self-other healing participation’ (Kotzé 2002:4).

These dominant discourses privilege confrontation and pain over more inclusive approaches. Teachers have been beneficiaries in this sense and have often used their power to induce pain in learners. This research has taken the position that although teachers themselves suffer under the discourse, this does not absolve them of responsibility. It was therefore evident throughout this work that corporal punishment without prior respectful communication has forced learners to feel bored, hate and want to retaliate as a form of resistance. It has also proved costly, for it has subjected teachers to pain and unnecessary financial spending. ‘*We have to nurse our aching bodies after spanking learners*’ said teachers. This asserts that such practices disqualify alternative means of discipline even though the disruptive forces of deconstruction are already imminent, for they ‘induce regular effects of power’ (Foucault 1980:131).

It was also evident that corporal punishment has often closed doors for teachers to listen to the learners’ views. From this stance, it can be argued that spanking learners does not reflect their ultimate potential or failure to accomplish the kind of behaviour different factors in the school call for. Instead it focuses on the negative rather than positive and affirming practices. For instance, the head girl said ‘*we should not always be told what not to do instead be motivated about what to do*’. This was evident throughout the research and indicates a need, in line with current teaching literature, to have more training in positive feedback practices.

Externalizing conversations exposed the problem, as described by the head girl, as ‘the negative attitude’ and not the participants. It was in moving away from these thin,

or destructive conclusions around the taken-for-granted practices, that many alternatives to corporal punishment began to emerge, such as advocating teachers' use of gentle, firm and strong words for they are hardly forgotten; using alternative punishments to corporal punishment such as informing parents about their children's behaviour; denying them things they enjoy.

5.2.1 Effects of the stick on learners' academic deliverance

The role of the Derridian framework of deconstruction helped the research to expose some of the fragments of knowledge that were already present, but hidden, in the dominant discourse. Thus the deconstructive nature of our conversations brought us to the awareness that, spanking is generally unhelpful as well as abusive to students. They learn to label each other as 'goody goody', or tell lies in order to avoid punishment. The academically less able find their identities in being 'naughty', which drives them further away from the school's objectives for them to succeed. As one student said *'that thing (the stick) instills fear in us... we lie to our parents to avoid pain'*. This leads to truancy. It also appeared that fear of the stick also chases their concentration and good memory away thereby subjecting them to 'forgetfulness and helplessness'. It remains a challenge then on how can we together collaborate so as to move beyond learners' 'lying', 'fear', and 'truancy' to discourses surrounded by trust for one another.

5.3 A reflection on the research process

5.3.1 My own assumptions about Pastoral care in school discipline and how this has affected the research

I came in this work with my own preconceived ideas and assumptions concerning the resistance to this research that I anticipated from those in authority. These assumptions were, as indicated in the background of this study in chapter one, very much influenced by my cultural up-bringing, and by my position as the teacher and therapist in this school. For instance, I thought that somehow my principal would not be co-operative in this work with the view that may be I was going to loosen the school's discipline by giving the learners a voice or advocating that learners should not be punished.

This fear was motivated by my awareness of the powerful discourses of old structures of discipline sustaining her power position; thus to be in control and make sure that everything gets 'fixed'. Also the knowledge of the certain structures she has always employed for years. Again by the fear that as one of the young teachers (both in age and teaching experience) I would be seen as bringing my own ways of discipline in the school run by her. Thus, I had anticipated much resistance with the emergence of my other ways of working; for she knows that as the school counselor I somehow advocate 'learner opinion'. I am however not suggesting she, nor other teachers do not advocate it. These fears were both a stumbling block as well as a motivating force to find ways of working that were inclusive to her knowledge and authority.

Both the principal and her deputy showed complete support for this study and allowed me to carry out this work in our school. Furthermore, the narrative and participatory tools I used further helped to dismantle the opposition. Thus, the participatory nature of this work, and the awareness of Derridian disruptive forces of deconstruction ever present in any identity helped to expose much resistance through out the conversations and in prior arrangements. For instance, some colleagues had their own opinions about this study, but I looked at the 'other' unsaid implications from their views, thus

avoiding the trap of falling into a polarized position with them. Again, the externalizing conversations and the non-blaming nature of this work helped the learners to voice their concerns and challenge their own blindness that had often made them vulnerable to shark biting in the form of spanking.

I also held another fear that, maybe because of my power position as the teacher who had physically punished some of the learners before and maybe unfairly so, they would be reluctant to journey with me. I also thought that even those who might attend our conversations would not open up. But the non-blaming approach the research took helped to dismantle such resistance. Also the fact that I informed the learners from the onset that this time around I was not going to teach but listen to what they had to say may have helped them to open up.

5.4 Need for further research

Another responsibility we are faced with as a school is, to challenge the learners' settled certainty that, their long time exclusion from disciplinary issues suggests that they are unworthy. This unpacking would challenge one of their beliefs that 'being a child and a student is different from being a person, because a person like a married brother is often consulted instead of being beaten'. But still, in retrospect I could have asked them 'a history of relation questions' (Freedman & Combs 1996:122), thus explored how they came to inform themselves in that way. These types of questions could have revealed more experiences of being spanked in the past that could have encouraged this way of thinking for it is one of the 'negative attitude' sustainers. It would be interesting to further explore this, even as an informal study. This would help to reveal the taken for granted on going roles or contexts that support this way of thinking thereby putting learners in danger of perpetuating the system as soon as they

get the opportunity to. It is in exposing and deconstructing these roles of the dominant cultural practices or knowledges both at home and at school that the dominant problematic webs are challenged.

Furthermore, our journey exposed that media is influential on our learners' ways of responding to corporal punishment, both positively and negatively. It therefore remains a challenge on how teachers can tentatively challenge the unsaid discourses within our culture by hitting the nail on the head as the media does. However, the challenge remains on how teachers and parents' views can be easily accessed through telephones, televisions, computers, newspapers and the like, if such a need arises. But still the problem lies with the way we present our information to learners which may at times lack precision and motivation due to the unsaid discourses within our culture. The challenge is on how then can we as teachers and parents keep the powers informing us more advanced or informed as those of media for they are more dynamic than the old structures of communication that prefer one way communication (a confrontational one)? It would be also more interesting to explore this. The other huge task is also on how can we further harness our love, as suggested by the head girl, that is demonstrated by actions that are opposite of insults, shaming, bursting at learners and all other obedience-restraining practices so as to be attentive to the generation gap?

Another challenge that could be addressed in a future study is to demystify the static, non-motivational and confrontational nature of morning assembly for prayer, whereby learners are sometimes shamed by teachers. That is, how can we explore alternative ways towards reaching a cheerful assembly without giving them too much freedom? I would also love to ask the teachers about the factors that sustained their shaming of learners at the assembly.

This way of working could help us challenge the godly and moral body constructed by confessional discourses in the participants' bodies so as to achieve a relentless interrelated moment-to-moment living. However, I am aware that challenging the larger cultural expectations and Basotho practices that propagate learning unquestioned obedience to those in authority by children comes with risks. Thus, the risks of holding on to the saturated fragmented story till the newly constructed are put in place are such that if there is no support from those in authority, the newly emerged voices maybe blown off by the strong confessional winds.

5.4.1 Alternative challenges facing our school.

Even though this work has used a participatory angle to incorporate learners' voices; it remains a challenge whether my voice was 'a gentle, firm and strong one' as privileged by learners. My voice was limited in offering them the sense of agency and sense of responsibility in their future endeavours around fully participating in matters that call for a respectful communication. If this is so, how then as a school can 'the dominant voices' harness the less powerful ones to challenge their exclusion from dominant disciplining structures at our school in order for the students themselves not to reproduce the oppression once they move into positions of power?

Another responsibility we are faced with as a school is, to challenge the learners' settled certainty that, their long time exclusion from around disciplinary means that they are not respected.

5.5 The contribution of this study.

5.5.1 An outcome: Weaving and tucking in alternate threads to the web.

The aims of this study were to deconstruct the power relationships held between teachers and pupils in order to build a different power relationship that is not based on blame, but rather on mutual respect. Secondly, it aimed at challenging corporal punishment as an absolute life giving way of punishing learners. Thirdly, it sought to raise awareness with teachers to find other alternative ways of discipline in collaboration with students. These aims have been met, because the research has challenged the oppressive patriarchal notions of power practiced by teachers, confessional and fundamentalist theological as well as pastoral powers and their biased restraining effects on both learners and teachers. It has also included teachers as an outside witness group so as to raise the awareness with the learners towards reaching the alternative disciplining means.

This work is not a final destiny but rather the beginning and a call to the emergence of many more alternative traces due to deconstruction and demystification of most fundamental notions of power concerning disciplining learners in schools. This does not suggest that it is a basis from which to begin, but rather its co-constructed and participatory nature positions it as a series of interrelated disciplining structures waiting to be given a firmer stance.

These interrelated structures call for the responsibility to align ourselves as the school with parents, the government and other stake holders. Positioning ourselves in this way and in alliance with the findings of this research may help the government's training programs to assist teachers live up to the high expectations of parents and government on academic deliverance and school behaviour. Thus, the government can also improvise the educating and supporting programs to help teachers use corporal

punishment in collaboration with other alternate means of disciplining learners. That alliance can reduce teachers' fear of job loss due to spanking and at the same time being forced to spank so as to ease the pain or please some parents.

By offering in-house training in the light of this research, the school might find ways of breaking away from the cultural restraining effects of repetitive blaming discourses. This would be enhanced by learner focused practices such as implementation of respectful communication targeting, class room management, understanding of individual learner behaviour and differences. This would also challenge the teacher-taken-for-granted-privilege around seeing learners as objects of the stick. This opens unexpected spaces and alternatives. There remains many questions in my mind, one of which is: what might happen if teacher training programmes included learner consultation rather than 'lectures' on new forms of discipline? In other words if the students were allowed to participate with teachers in finding ethical ways of relating how effective would corporal punishment be?

Both parents and teachers could benefit from the deconstructive nature of this work, particularly in being afforded the opportunity to stand back and reflect on practices without being placed in a polarized position of needing to be defensive. It would be good to create a forum where they could be encouraged to look at the learners from another perspective. For example, before lashing out they could consider some of these questions:

-What motivated the learner/child to behave in a particular way? How does that particular problem worm its way and manage to be dominant in that learner's life? And how does she actually behave when not under the influence of that problem?

- How did I as a teacher or parent contribute in that way of behaving? How has my own upbringing influenced my practices? How does my reaction and punishment further perpetuate the problem?

-How do we come to know or judge whether a certain mistake is dangerous or sinful to a learner, thereby calling for sanctification through the stick? Or is that behaviour just a learner's natural response alogical to adult understanding? As a result what is the best method to control the specific behaviour so as to encourage 'positive' attitude and behaviour in future?

It remains a challenge for the school to find alternate voices. In other words tapping in these new discourses brings about new 'other' challenges that also in their ways will be limited in their season of effectiveness. For instance, the teachers complained that as much as they would love to employ it the kids are so many that it might be difficult to give every child an ear.

The challenge in this respect is to find ways of endorsing and assisting the Ministry of Education and Training, as well as the school administration and board members, along with the teachers and learners to implement alternate models of discipline in the school that will be seen to benefit all stake-holders

5.5.2 Calling in the audience and opening up to evaluation and critique

Our school as a caring community needs to enhance different and formal links between the school and other child-care centred organizations. Such institutions include CGPU (Child, Gender Protection Unit), Child helpline and Lesotho Aids

Commission who have recently been doing a great work in unmasking the restraining forces behind these unsaid discourses by visiting our school and opening discussions with our learners. This has proven effective for our learners have been free to voice out their concerns in such meetings.

Positioning ourselves in this way could challenge what Foucault calls getting trapped in the dense webs of dominant discourses. I am however aware that this comes with risks of privileging a more informed collective responsibility around the effective means of disciplining learners ahead of the more prescriptive one. Thus, this alternative power positioning comes with challenges of what we may substitute what has always assumed to be true with.

5.6 Some limitations of this study

Like any other research, this work has its limitations. For instance, some teachers were prepared to risk this journey into the unknown and others refused. Some of the learners pulled out due to different factors such as sitting for final examinations; it could also be possible that the head girl's confrontational approach in the first conversation and the presence of other teachers in our second conversation made some learners not to turn up. I spent a great deal of energy worrying about these. This could have been avoided, if for example, I had selected a different school to research on, thus, one that I was not emotionally engaged with.

It is also likely that the dominant discourses sustaining my own position may have advocated a binary caused by my position as the teacher and therapist. This might have made my voice the most important in our conversations thereby making me a 'generic professional' (Freedman and Combs 1996:286) giving advice and

pronouncements to the participants unaware. The same privilege might have also made me select and analyze some texts/themes, from chapter three, that the participants could have otherwise seen as not important.

A somewhat contradictory position I took in this journey was to make the assumption that God is on the side of the nameless and oppressed, thus falling into a binary form of opposition. This theological position juxtaposed my philosophical position of deconstruction, in which I sought to move away from binaries. As a result, I privileged the contextual theologies for they helped to challenge the power imbalances and side with those who need a voice at the expense of more pragmatic ones. This research may have forced teachers to confess their own shortcomings to learners, though the aim was to tentatively challenge the fundamentalist and confessional theological powers embedded in them.

The results may have gone either way if I had included learners of different classes, or those from a mixed school or in rural settlements and teachers from other schools and a representative from the ministry of education.

Teachers were subjected to more learner scrutiny and this mostly emancipated learner's voices. Thus, by making teachers outside witness group forced them to participate within the scopes of the tiny space I had allotted them. As a result, I would therefore love to make them the interviewees and make learners participate as outside witness group in future.

I, however, realized that externalizing conversations might come with risks. Thus, the risks of directing the problem to external factors may at other times reduce the individual's responsibility over their own shortcomings and direct an unaccepted

behaviour to the problem. For instance, learners in this case may put the entire blame on ‘negative attitude’ as though they have not contributed in giving it a firmer stance in their school life.

5.7 Summary

The research question has been addressed, for this work has not done away with our present old disciplining structure but has re-examined it anew, exposed and emancipated other ways that had been located low by the old structure. The research has also achieved its aims, by using the deconstructive conversations in chapter three to challenge corporal punishment as an absolute life giving way of punishing learners.

Foucault’s and Derridarian contribution in this research to understanding theological as well as pastoral power relations as a relational activity has helped the research to particularly expose the trappedness that both teachers and students experience in the more traditional authoritative stance. This has helped both parties to know when and what supports the shark attacks (negative attitude and oppressive effects of corporal punishment) in our school as an ocean discourse that has to be dolphin friendly. Dolphin friendly discourses are those dominated by ‘positive attitude’ to everything at school, as suggested by the head girl.

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